

The Gleaner
2005-2006





The Gleaner *2005-2006*

Established 1901

Delaware Valley College
Doylestown, Pennsylvania

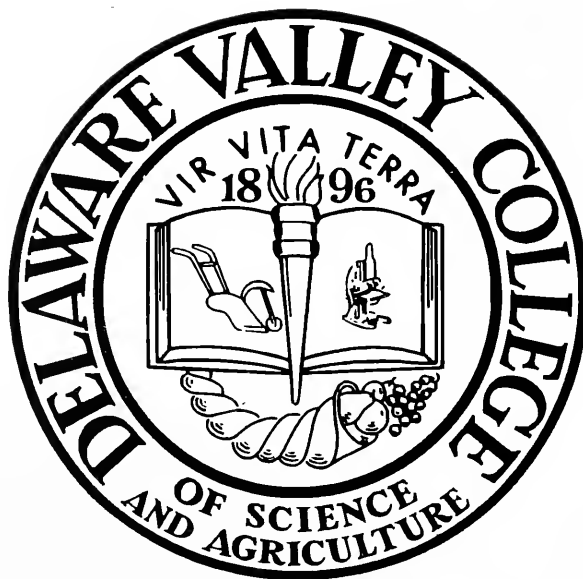
Co-Editors

Kathleen Weaver

Fil Derck

Publication Advisor

Dr. Karen Schramm



2005-2006 Gleaner Staff



*Kristian Lake
Kate Zelitch
Ed Angerami
Patrice Gusano
Loren Garnett Lewis
Steph Lucas*

*Front Cover: Alexis Ritter
Inside Back Cover: John Heusser
Back Cover: Angela Weber*

Special thanks to the following:

*Dr. Linda Maisel for coordinating the
Gleaner High School Writing Competition*

*Mr. Barry Denlinger and
Tiger Printing Group, for their time and generosity*

Mr Hank F. Fox and Fox Bindery, Inc. for their time and generosity

So Many Words, So Little Time

I admit it. I'm a word whore and a writer, which explains, and to some extent should exonerate, my lustful love affair with words. A voracious reader, I gluttonously gobble up words as fast as my middle-aged eyes can travel across a page. I am so obsessed with words I keep several fluorescent yellow Hi-Liters® stashed around the house, and in my truck, never knowing when the urge will strike to highlight an unknown word. Rest assured, only books I personally own fall victim to my Hi-Liters®. Lately, my obsession has escalated to carrying a small notebook where I greedily scribble my word treasures. However, I discovered I am not alone in this obsession, as other writers have readily confessed to this practice and in print no less.

On my desk, standing like soldiers at attention, are two dictionaries and a thesaurus. In addition, I have at least four other, newer dictionaries but these two see the most action. A faded red, circa 1975 hard back cover torn at the edges stands at the ready for words no longer used or carried over to its newer, circa 2001 edition neighbor. Which prompts me to wonder what the shelf life of a dictionary is in the new millennium? There are times, I swear, when I hear the three of them calling me or, much worse, bickering like siblings over who will be grabbed first.

Often, through no fault of their own, all six fail me and that's when my mind wanders off to dream about owning the mother of all dictionaries – the 20 volume Oxford English Dictionary revered and lovingly referred to by seriously addicted word-smiths as the OED.

The OED's 22,000 pages, encompassing 500,00 entries, might temporarily slake my insatiable obsession, until the next edition emerges, for not only newer words but older words unceremoniously discarded through lack of use but still fondly remembered by those who still employ them.

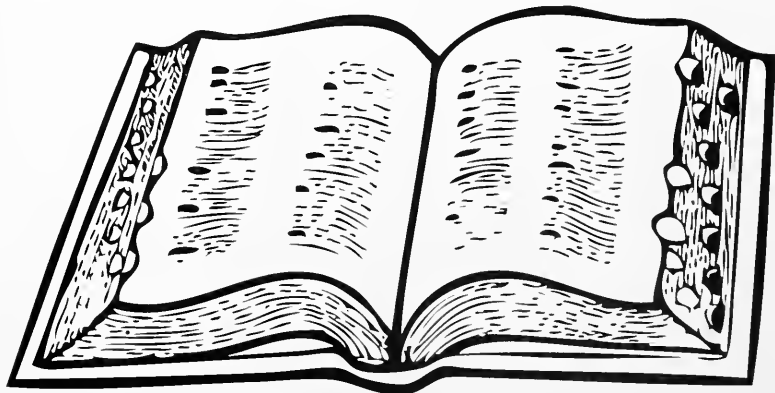
Unfortunately, the \$1500 cost is well beyond my paltry salary, not to mention the space it would engulf in my small house. But if I could afford such a glorious bas-

tion of the English language, as well as the moving men needed to deliver it – it weighs 151 pounds--, it would be ensconced on an oak lectern with a recessed spotlight shining over it. Yes, I am well aware a more affordable CD-ROM version exists, but looking up a word via that conduit defeats and greatly lessens the experience one garners by looking words up the traditional way.

The CD-ROM version, no doubt, has the ubiquitous, narrow rectangular box where you key in the word. Within seconds, like magic, the word and its various definitions appear and that's all – just that word. For someone so obsessed with words, it's like putting me in solitary word confinement. Whereas, turning crinkly, onion-skin pages, the traditional way, allows for an added and greater benefit -- a smorgasbord of words in the vicinity of the word you're looking for. Who knows? You might discover a word you never knew or reunite with one you forgot. To some it might seem a laborious process but it's no different than getting lost in the pages of a good book.

I realize I am a dinosaur in a society that clamors for and relishes the insane speed of text messaging, emoticons, and acronyms to communicate. But I am determined to tenaciously cling, like a Titanic survivor, to the traditional way of looking for a word and its various definitions. For a serious word lover and a writer, whose motto is "so many words, so little time," it's as much about the journey as it is the destination.

Chris Ochadlick



Evening Endeavors

*At the end of day the Sun sets
Our eyes moving closer to rest
The horizon reaches its glimmering peak
While weakened waves ripple over our feet*

*Shining out, the Sun flares throughout the sky
The moon suddenly appears by its side
Slowly with grace silver night invades
Cooling the fires of day's rampant raids*

*A breeze is born, swirling sand around
While stars fall to a gilded ground
Thoughts have consumed us and dreams awoken
To that place our souls are taken*

*It's you, me, the stars and sea
And together we weave our reality
We live our life honest and true
Every day love refreshed with the morning dew*

*Then one reckless wave bursts past our feet
And the dream goes into sudden retreat
So quickly the magic was lost
So soon was night cold with frost*

*Yet together we walk hand in hand
Past other footprints left in the sand
Forever we remain together as one
Waiting each day for the setting Sun*

LMP

The Smelt

*Have you ever felt-
that you smelled a smelt
a smelt that's melt
is a smelly smelt*

*Consider- the lowly smelt
of him, we require, not his pelt
To warm us in our snowy climes
In him esteem, we haven't heldt
unlike the tiger in stripe-ed veldt
nor thought him much -sublime*

*But in his mirth, upon the earth
we've strived, to shorten his time
because he is a most delicious fish
and makes up quite a tasty dish
whether baked, sautéed, or fried*

*The smelt is a hydrogenous fish- you know
whether to salty seas, or streams of melting snow
he'll exultantly swim, and most cheerfully go*

*To purchase him -is quite reasonable
find him in -fish foods that are freezable
Yes, caught up neatly in poly-bags you'll find
him nicely packaged, -in quite a bind*

*Invite him back to dinner as your guest
for taste he is reputed, among the best
-this I've done- and more (I confess)
In churches- I have never knelt
to pray for the souls of the smelt
solemnities, not required, so I felt
for such small-fry, as the lowly smelt*

*But at least I do him the honor today
since he's not one of the fishies -that got away
to make of him, some small simple snack
so for purpose, his life will not have lacked*

*I tell you (in conclusion) I have beheldt
the fine, the small, the glorious smelt
(and have often thought) and sometimes felt
that a smelt that's melt is a smelly smelt*

by Chris Mullen

Photo by Cheryl Munizza "Reflections"

ALZHEIMERS
April 21, 2005, I think.

WHO?

"Let's see...,you're...."

WHAT?

"I forget."

WHERE?

"If I could just remember."

WHEN?

"Was it yesterday, today, or just
a minute ago?"

WHY?

"These pesky things!"

"It doesn't matter."

HOW?

"I wish I knew."

Dr. Richard Ziemer, Ph.D.



Two for One

Burnt orange, softening wisps of white
The sentry of time orders darkness to rest
It is here on this beach that I greet first light

I watch my mother's hand move gulls in flight
The sound of waves, her measured lullaby
Loving and singing all that is brought to life
She toils in life giving more than what's meant
Giving, giving until all is spent
The wave rolls in and I am left onshore crying.
Her love, now my life
Silently she returns to the sea

Thor and his hammer thunder at wave-break
A relentless pounding, echoing what is right
Solitary eyes with no reprieve,
belying truth, tested and true
Sound is torn asunder as brilliance strips sense
I watch in tears as the wave rolls out
His truth, now my life
Silently he returns to the sea

They are gone now
But each wave says no
Love rolls in and truth rolls out
Somewhere in between we question and doubt
The answer is given at the end of the ride
So be silent, feel their motion deep inside

Jimi McGee



Photo by Jill Geisler

Losing the Battle

*Shrouded in a dark cloud
Barely a trace of life.
Tears surrounding the pain.
Relentless is death,
A predator pursuing the undeserving.
Torturous pain.
Hoping...
But freedom is in death.
I am here.
Presence known,
Calms the soul of the dying.
Lightens the load.
Loves me still.
Wishing...
Fading away.
Regret progressing.
Death's grip holding.
No more pain for the dead.
Troubled thoughts.
Grief.
Remembering...*

*In memory of the ever
devoted and loving Stewie
Summer 1999 - Winter 2002*

Katie Sickles



Photo by Katherine Darger

The Melody of Trees

With magic and majesty just so fair
The wind sweeps solemnly throughout the air
While silver boughs on ancient trees
Drink swiftly from the distant seas

Lost is the sky, behind a veil
As such, one would think the Sun had failed
Yet the trees whisper as the wind blows
The notes dance freely – while the song flows

From tree to tree the song passes
Each one adding to glorious stashes
The song once so simple and true
Now surrounds me closer, like walls of a room

Oh, the texture and feelings released
Some rage out while others retreat
Some tell of pain and hardships beyond,
Others of things of which they are fond

The song brings silence to my savaged soul
For a moment again I'm undoubtedly whole
Then slowly dying the song gains distance
One last echo bore intermittence

Yet again the trees stand, forged to their ground
But silenced are voices – those the wind found
Until once again boughs sway in time
The melody of trees is silent with rhyme.

I'd Do Anything

I'd do anything to show my love for you,
No matter what it be that you put me through.
I'd cross the Sahara to show you my devotion,
My love is much stronger than my love potion.
I'd climb Mount Everest just to make you smile,
I'd swim the entire distance of the great Nile.



Around the world in 80 days,
I'm willing to charm you in many ways.
I'd take a trip on the Oregon Trail,
With you as my inspiration I cannot fail.
Take a trip on Apollo 13, how far I'd go for you has yet to be seen.



I'd fly alone through the Bermuda Triangle,
I'd do anything to enchant you. This is my angle.
For you I'd go to the ends of the Earth,
I'll do anything you want, for all it's worth.
I'd go to Fenway wearing a Yankee's cap,
Steal cheese from a loaded mousetrap.

I'd run with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain,
With my hands I'd try to stop a moving train.
For you I'd find the Coveted Ark,
Walk at night alone through Central Park.
I'd go sky diving into the heart of Iran,
I'll show you my dedication whenever I can.

There's no limit to how far I'd go,
I'd sit through a marathon of That 70's Show.
Off Niagara Falls I'd go kayaking,
If I'm not pleasing you then I must be slacking.



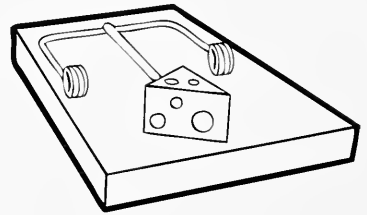


I'd go for a swim in shark infested seas,
Lock myself in a room full of killer bees.

I'd jump the Grand Canyon, the Evil Knievel way,
I don't know what else I can do, try or say.
I'd stand on my hands for a century and a half,
I'd do anything at all just to make you laugh.
I'd stand through a tornado in the flats of the Midwest,
If I'm bringing you joy then I'm at my best.

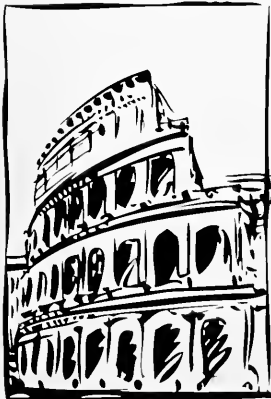
I'd take on a force stronger than the Roman Empire,
Fight single-handedly against a raging forest fire.

I'd go with no clothes to the arctic cold,
I'd live to make you happy, even when I'm old.
I'd tour the rainforest without a tour guide,
I'd fight 10 tigers with both hands tied.



I'd challenge a jaguar to a little foot race,
Whatever it takes to light up your beautiful face.
I'd walk on fire with bare feet,
Without water take on the sun's worst heat.

I don't have much to offer, just my dedication,
But I'll do anything to amaze you without reservation.



I'd build you pyramids to rival Giza,
Anything at all if I know it will please ya.
I'd find the Holy Grail and bring it to your home
I'd fight with no weapons in the Coliseum of Rome.
I'd do all these things just for a start,
I'll do anything at all just to earn your heart.

Ryan Neary



Photo by Ryan Neary

Generation Gap

FATHER

THUNDER ROLLING THROUGH THE STORM
LIGHTNING FLASHES AND THE CLOUDS ARE TORN
LIKE THE SKY ABOVE ON THE DAY YOU WERE BORN
I'M SEEING RAIN AND WIND IN A SWIRLING FORM

DAUGHTER

SOFT AND WARM BUT IT CAN GLOW SO BRIGHT
LIKE THE SUN WHICH SHINES AWAY YOUR NIGHTS
LIKE THE HEAT WHICH BURSTS AS IT SELF-IGNITES
I'M SEEING FIRE AND STEAM AND SPONTANEOUS LIGHT

LARRY STELMACH

Secret Window

I want to know
The person you are
When you're all alone
No watching eyes
Staring you down
No listening ears
Taking in your sounds
No groping hands
Holding you down
I want to gaze at you
Secretly, indiscreetly
I want to run my fingers
Through your hair
And not have you see me
Just know that I'm there
I want to hear you sing in the shower
Filling the room with
Forbidden hidden melodies
I want to breathe in
The smell of your cologne
As it caresses your skin
Melting into the water droplets
That are attempting to evaporate
I want to trace your glistening muscles
With my trembling fingertips
Feeling the perfect definition
I want to hold onto you
Hear your heart beat through
That big, soft sweatshirt
I want to hover over your shoulder
As you write your mysterious verses
Laying out your true self
I want to see the you
That you try to hide
But I know it's there
Deep down it resides
I want to pull it out
Take you by the hand
I want to be
Inside your world

Photo by Tamara Moorman



Photo by Kirstin Schumm

To be Free

*To dance with fools- and to converse with kinds
Preferring not one to the other-
To die and to be reborn- to different lives
To be freed by the lovely arms of the damsel poverty
From the damaging clutches of the coquette damsel wealth
And to laugh at death, To laugh at him in his face, and at all his minions
Saying I am worthy- I have been chosen to live to love to laugh,
(and) If even for this brief moment -I am alive!
Saying- Neither do I desire death -nor do I court life unduly
I will not be enticed by either you, -or the other one
You cannot attract me with promises of beauties, that are already within me-
There is nothing that life can give me that I do not already possess
And nothing that the shadow of night can take away from me
That once stolen, the dark thief, never owns*

ROMANCE



An eye for the catch,
He's the yin to my yang,
No need to ask am I his everything
He shows me his fears and protects me from mine
He assures me of his intentions in mind
Tells me I'm perfection in the eyes of his soul
Despite the flaws that are shown
Creating a future with me is his ultimate goal
Regulating his life also involving mine
Doesn't hesitate to feel this way – there is no uncertainty in his mind
I pray for him and he prays for me
An ear to hear my soul,
Listens to my words intimately
In unison he sees us as we
Soft spoken when speaking toward me
Chooses to speak of a tongue which is profound
Using dignity, integrity, intelligently responding to me
There's poetic rhyme to his reasoning
Presents himself as a perfect gentleman
He expresses his etiquette ways
Traditionally woos me
Orchids are optional
Roses are a reminder
Lilies can be lovely
But his heart is what I fancy
Unique, I AM, within
To him I'm no comparison
Tells me 'I love you' any day
Sweet nothings indicated and shows his fact just because of his actions
That's why I call him...ROMANCE

Nicelle Blanton

Photo by Alexis Ritter

*0 * Celsius*

*I am the winter tundra
lynx-eyed and sparest of tongue.
Holding Neptune's trident boldly
bloodied from self inflicted wound.*

*White wings diving fiercely
through howling solstice air.
Talons seizing paradigm
tossed under Cartesian avalanche.*

*I stand in far-off reaches
resplendent in white bear coat.
Conquering mythic monsters
the gods of death/fear men.*

*I call to hear only echo,
the God the self has won.
Baptized by a fire
that freezes all to one.*

Jimi McGee

Photo by Ryan Neary

The Rain Drop

The light patter of the rain against the window dazzled the young child. With widened eyes and a gaping mouth, she found that the water sliding down the glass grabbed her attention. The tiny prints from the fingers of curious hands smeared the once clean glass. Her breath emerged on the window and disappeared magically. The icy tinge from the freezing window sent chills up her spine with every touch. With each droplet missed, she let out a frustrated groan and frowned. The curious sensation provoked thought in the girl. She found it odd that the window was freezing, but everything else was warm and cozy. She didn't understand why she could see the water drops race down the window, but couldn't catch them. She would not accept this. Another capture attempt broke out. The girl's heart skipped a beat when she saw the treasure. An oversized water drop edged its way down the window, overpowering smaller raindrops. As it zigged and zagged, it captured more and more raindrops and grew larger and larger still. The child's anticipation overwhelmed her. She thrust her chubby hands at her target with stunning accuracy. She struggled to capture the drop, smearing more prints onto the window. As the drop weaved away from her, she frowned. Suddenly, a gust of wind picked the drop up and carried it away. It laughed at the girl as she realized what had happened. Kicking the wall, she became angry, but not long enough to resist trying to capture another drop. Inside, deserted toys covered the floor. These china dolls, stuffed bears, and china tea sets, unable to keep the child's short attention span, lay on the floor rotting away. Christmas toys, birthday toys, Easter toys, and toys from Kmart were forever cursed for their failure to entertain the child and forever banished to the floor. The stuffed animals yearned for a hug, the games longed for another chance to be played, and the Fisher Price kitchen desired to cook one more pizza. Hundreds of dollars were wasted as the child enjoyed the simple pleasure of watching rain droplets run down the window. Freshly baked cookies crept their way towards the consumed child. The smell grabbed the child and refused to let go. A spark went off in the child's eyes as she took the overwhelming bait. The realization of the treat widened the eyes more. With what she thought as careful planning, she deserted the absorbing window. The tantalizing smell lured the child into the kitchen for more mischief and maybe a forbidden cookie.

Tamara Moorman

Photo by Lindsay Cropper



Sleeping Beauty

You realize, of course, that you can't wake me

from my slumber

The poison runs too deep

You can't wake me, sleeping

Sleeping Beauty

The thorns rising up, surrounding, glistening

You realize, of course, that the Prince's

efforts are futile

Crawling through the thorns

Lacerated to the core

Don't bother

I'm too far gone

There's no use in rescuing her

The blood has pooled

Photo by Kirstin Schumm

Ruby red lips and pale porcelain
Amongst the glistening poison
The Prince needs the rescuing
Too far gone with poison
The Prince joins her in slumber
No use trying to wake them
They sleep for all eternity
If Sleeping Beauty could wake up,
What would that mean?
Her prince is dead from her poison
So she would bathe his wounds
And kiss his heart
To wake her Sleeping Beauty

Michelle Neumann



Photo by Kirstin Schumm

It Was Just A Dream:

*It was just a dream, for Heaven's sake,
But it's the feelings now that I cannot shake.*

*As much as I'd like to dismiss them as fake,
Why are they still here now that I'm awake?*

*There's too much to think about, I need a break,
How much more of this can I take?*

*Am I destined to drown in an emotional lake,
Or is this a test to see what sacrifices I'm
willing to make?*

*However real it may seem,
I must remember, it was only a dream...*

Ryan Neary

**Photo by John Heusser
"Sailor's Delight"**

Once Loved

Even the least of us are loved
Even the most unnoticeable...

But this hole seems much too large for you.

Even the most unusual can be loyal
Even the most unexpected...

But this emptiness seems much too deep for you.

Even the ones who cannot articulate
Even the ones who cannot speak...

But this darkness seems too overwhelming for you.

Even I can now understand
Even I can now see...

How much you meant to me.

For my little wheeler...Nemo
Summer 2002 – Winter 2004

Katie Sickles



The Prairie

Long ago the prairie wild- was in your all,
your gentle smile you knew its wave and all its
mile, Its carefree day and furied fire
All were tucked away somewhere -each petal
-stamen - blade of grass and how they would
unfurl- And where each one you'd place as
best -in relation to the rest. And then-
how the wind would whirl and through that
sea its whistling swirl, to launch aloft the
downy seed - in wisdom for the prairie's need.
You who knew this- more indeed, knew men
would come and call them weeds -even life on
silken wings -as if they were not worthy

by Chris Mullen

Don't Steal Towels (and Other Marriage Tips)

I once stole a towel from a Hilton Hotel. It was in Rye, New York. I was on a business trip to see a client and I had used the Hilton's pool. They had towels at poolside. You didn't have to bring one from your room. But, as opposed to the fluffy white towels you found in the rooms there, the towels at poolside were thin and a couple different shades of pink. In short, they were pretty ugly towels.

I took a pink towel back to my hotel room after a swim and I got a call that said I was needed urgently back at the office. I had to check out right away. After some rapid packing, there was the matter of the wet bathing suit. I decided to take it home wrapped in one of the Hilton pink towels.

When I got home and unpacked my luggage, I came across the towel. Now the sensible thing would have been to return it to the Hilton on my next trip, but looking at the towel I wondered if it was worth the effort. I decided to use it to clean my golf clubs or some other equally unworthy task. I put it in the laundry basket and forgot about it.

A couple days later, my wife left on a trip to Ohio to see her parents; the kids went with her because they were out of school. I was left on my own for a week. The day before they came back I was forced into my clean-up mode.

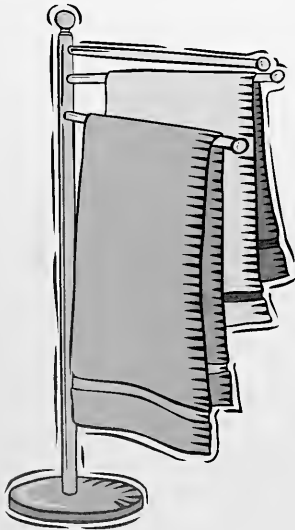
My wife and I have different tolerances for disorder. I seem to thrive in it while she hunts it down like a suspected terrorist. Under normal everyday living circumstances, there are only minor issues. A few times a week she will find situations I have created which push her over her limit, she will chastise me for my transgressions, and I will make a half-hearted effort to clean up. She will then improve my work up to her standards and we will continue on. But when she goes away and comes back, it is much more serious. It is as if she forgets our system. Particularly coming back from her mother's immaculate housekeeping style, she is liable to react quite strongly (and for quite a long time) to my style of disorder.

Over the years I have developed self-preservation strategies to handle my wife's periodic trips and returns. The first strategy was to make her return a celebration. If she went away by herself, the kids and I would decorate the house with streamers, balloons, and "welcome home" signs. Confetti would be everywhere. We would create such a mess that the disorder which occurred while she was away turned into background noise. This worked once because she was touched. The second time, not so good. She correctly pointed out that it just created a lot more work for her to do.



My second strategy was what I called “the big box.” This was a strategy I had developed during my single days and refined to an art in marriage. I would take a large box, say something the size a big screen TV comes in, and go around the house and pick up anything that was obviously not clean or in its correct place and put it in the box. When all the debris was in the box, I would hide it somewhere (garage, attic, etc.). A quick turn with the vacuum to make the rug stand up a bit and I was done. This was a pretty successful system until something important was missing and I had to reveal the location of the box. Like one time I had some dishwashing issues and I deposited some used pots and pans in the box. Not so good.

A third strategy turned into the worst failure and made me recognize that there is a certain hopelessness to life. I employed strategy number three when my wife left me at home with the kids for a week. The house rapidly deteriorated. Two days before she came home, I took a day off from work. I cleaned everything. All the laundry in the house was washed and put away. All the rooms were vacuumed. All the bathrooms were cleaned. I washed all the floors and windows. I sent the kids away to sleepovers the night before my wife’s return and I cleaned their rooms from top to bottom. I made all the beds. The mail was all sorted. The trashcans were all emptied. The litter boxes were clean. The food in the pantry was sorted and in straight rows. There was fresh milk and bread. The lawn was cut. When she arrived home I was exhausted, but I had a roast in the oven and we sat down to a full dinner in the dining room where the table was set and fresh flowers decorated the center of the table. Before dessert, she took a walk around the house. I heard her go up into the attic and out in the garage looking for the box. She came back to the table and started to cry. At first I mistook the crying as tears of joy, but they were not. She started to shake a little. “You don’t need me,” she sobbed. “I could die and you wouldn’t miss me.” Not so good.



So, with this history in mind, I was now preparing the house for my family’s return. I had settled on my fourth Wife Management Strategy: the house needs to be just below her minimum standards. She’ll come home, get mad, but only a little. In a couple hours we are back to normal. I had developed a checklist of optimum conditions. The trashcans are half full. The sink is three quarters full of dirty dishes, but the counters are spotless. The living room and dining room rugs are vacuumed, but the family room rug has clearly not been touched. There is a full load of towels that are dirty, but the sinks and the shower are at 90%. The mail is unsorted, but nicely stacked in a cardboard box. We are just about out of milk and bread, but have enough to make it to tomorrow.

This strategy had actually worked a couple of times, so I was somewhat confident. My checklist said everything was right except for the towels. I had almost 2 loads of dirty towels. I quickly put one of the loads in the wash. When the towels came out of the dryer, I noticed the pink towel from the Hilton.

But, I was in a rush. My wife had called when they had exited the Turnpike and she would be home in about ten minutes. I quickly took the laundered towels upstairs and put them all away in the bathroom.

At first, strategy four went exactly to plan. The kids were happy to be home and out of the car. Luggage was everywhere. My wife looked around at the condition of the house and said, "I guess it could be worse." I congratulated myself on a well-earned victory. However, there was a time bomb ticking in the linen closet.

The next day when I got home from work it was clear that something was amiss. My wife was not speaking to me. She was withdrawn and distant. Some people claim that they know their significant other so well that they can read their minds. I have never been able to do that. I think it is only women that make this claim. A man trying to read a woman's mind is trying to read a book written in a language with alien letters and symbols that he can never understand. So for me, when my wife is in one of these moods, it becomes a guessing game I call: "What is wrong now?" Here is how you play: I get to ask a series of questions. The first is, "What's wrong?" The answer will be "Nothing" or "You don't care." It is then up to me to ask questions that begin with, "Is it _____?" or "Are you _____?" Responses may come back in the form of a sentence, a sentence fragment, a sigh, or a gesture. A sarcastic comment usually means you are very cold. The game continues until you guess the problem or you are confronted with it in a torrent of words that start out about your lack of sensitivity and end up with the statement of the problem. Terms of surrender are negotiated and the game is over.

However, this time I was a poor contestant. I could tell by her answers that I wasn't even close. I gave up and went upstairs. A couple minutes later she followed me. She had something behind her back. I was pretty sure it wasn't a weapon. She looked at me and said, "You had a girl over here when I was gone."

I was stunned, but happy. Here for a change I was being blamed for something of which I was not guilty. What a relief. I fought back a smile and said, "Why would you say that?"

"Because, she left her laundry." My wife produced the pink Hilton towel from behind her back.

At this point, I laughed. Guys, you may get a lot of advice on marriage. Some of it will be good, but a lot will be bad. But here is a piece of advice I have a lot of confidence in: the best response after being accused of infidelity is not laughing. My wife threw the towel at me and left the room, slamming the door behind her.

I should not have laughed, but I had experienced a series of weird associations at the sight of that towel. At first, I



thought of myself as some cheap vacation rental property where you have to bring your own sheets and towels. Then I tried to envision the type of girl who would bring her own linens to a tryst. Finally, I had moved on to the "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" where a famous maxim is to "always know where your towel is." These thoughts had flashed through my mind and caused me to laugh – exactly the wrong thing to do.

I gave my wife ten minutes to settle down and I went to find her. She was sitting in the library staring at an open book. "Look," I started, "I didn't bring a girl"

She looked up at me and interrupted with an "I know."

I stared at her. "Ten minutes ago, you accused me of having a girl over here and now you say you know I didn't. What changed your mind? Did Oprah call?"

"You laughed," she said. "You wouldn't have laughed if it were true."

"So there is no problem, right?" I was stupid to be so hopeful.

She turned away slightly. "What kind of insensitive person would laugh about something like that? You could see I was upset. Only an insensitive jerk would find it funny."

I thought of explaining about the shore rental, girls who bring their own laundry, and about Hitchhikers.... And then I thought, what is the point? I had been insensitive. I had stolen a towel from Mr. Hilton. I was guilty of insensitivity, just at a different time and place than my wife was describing. I told her that I was wrong and that I would try to be a better person.

Guys, while you are married, you are going to mess up. You are going to forget an anniversary. You are going to stare at that twenty-year-old girl in a bikini a little too long when you are at the shore. You are going to play golf when you told her you were going to the office. You are going to get caught for some of these things, but not all. Not nearly. So when you are accused of something that you think is unfair, the best course of action may be to just admit it. Just think of all the things you have gotten away with; you're still way ahead. And in the long run, it leads to a happier wife.



No wife wants a perfect husband. A perfect husband is no fun because he can't be improved. A perfect husband might be stolen away by someone younger and prettier. With a perfect husband, there is little a wife can complain about to her girlfriends. Don't limit your wife's happiness by trying to be too good a person. And that is the best piece of marriage advice I can give you.

Larry Stelmach

All About You

Onyx eyes I want to kiss.
A black silken mane to twist and curry
Entwining limbs with bites,
galloping, galloping in lather and froth.

Heated breath of winter mountains,
moon reflected on the sweat of breast,
Inside the warm wet of sunwaves,
bucking in wildness
I flow into her sea.

Jimi McGee

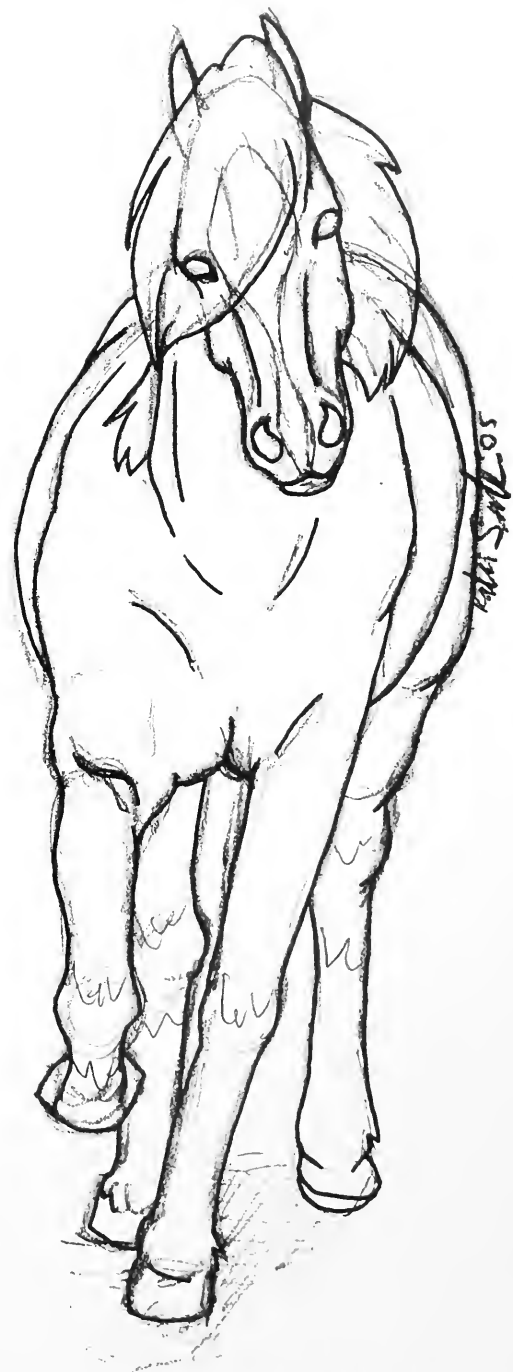


Photo by Katie Sickles

THE HUMAN TOUCH

WHEN TIM WALKED INTO MY OFFICE MAY 1985, AFTER FINAL EXAMS, I THOUGHT HE WANTED TO DISCUSS HIS GRADE. INSTEAD HE SAID, “DR. ZIEMER, I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR TEACHING ME THIS SEMESTER.” AS I STOOD TO SHAKE HIS HAND, INSTEAD OF REACHING OUT TO SHAKE MINE, HE EMBRACED ME WITH THE FIRST HUG FROM A MAN THAT I HAD RECEIVED SINCE MY DAD AND GRANDFATHER HUGGED ME AGES AGO BEFORE WE PARTED FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME. YES, I WAS HUGGED BY ANOTHER MAN—A STUDENT THIS TIME. I REMEMBER BEING WARMED BY TIM’S OUTREACH TO ME, PONDERING HOW UNPREPARED I WAS NOT TO LOOK AT HIS GESTURE AS A VITAL PART OF HUMAN NURTURING.

AS I REFLECTED ON HUGS, I THOUGHT HOW MINE HAD COME FROM AUNTS AND UNCLES AND GRANDPARENTS, AND MY OWN FATHER, BUT NOT READILY FROM MY MOM. OUR DAD COULD NOT WALK PAST ANY OF US HIS FOUR YOUNG SONS WITHOUT PICKING US UP, THROWING US UP INTO THE AIR AND, YES, CATCHING US OR WHISKERING US (UNTIL WE YELLED FOR MOM TO RESCUE US), OR GIVING US ONE OF HIS BEAR HUGS. WE WERE TOUCHED IN DISCIPLINE BY SPANKING AND BY HUGS AS CHILDREN AND EVEN AS YOUNG ADULTS BY DAD ZIEMER, OUR PAUL BUNYAN.

LATER THAT YEAR AT THANKSGIVING WHEN MY FATHER HAD A STROKE AT HIS HOME IN OREGON, IT WAS TIM’S FAMILY THAT I CALLED FIRST AND ASKED FOR THEIR PRAYERS AS I MADE MY WAY TO MY ANCESTRAL HOME VIA A RED EYE FLIGHT. IT WAS TIM’S FAMILY’S PRAYERS OF “MAY GOD’S WILL BE DONE” THAT OFFERED ME COMFORT DURING THAT INCIDENT AND MY DAD’S SOON, EVENTUAL DEATH, SHORT OF A FORTNIGHT.

AFTER OUR DAUGHTER’S GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL MY OWN MOTHER AND MY WIFE WERE STANDING NEAR ME WHEN I WAS DISPATCHED TO GET THE CAR TO PICK THEM UP. AS I LEFT THE BLEACHERS, I COULD SEE GRADUATES TOSSING MORTAR BOARDS UP INTO THE AIR, WRITING DOWN CONTACT NUMBERS OF THEIR FRIENDS, EXCHANGING KEEPSAKES, AND HUGGING ONE ANOTHER. LATER THAT NIGHT AS MY WIFE AND I WERE ALONE, SHE REFLECTED, “YOUR MOTHER SAID SOMETHING VERY ILLUMINATING AT OUR DAUGHTER’S GRADUATION. WHEN SHE SAW ALL THE GRADUATES HUGGING EACH OTHER, SHE SAID, ‘I WISH I COULD BE THAT SPONTANEOUS WITH SHOWING MY AFFECTION.’” DID THAT TELL THE TALE OF WHY I MAY AT TIMES LACK “THE MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS”? COULD THAT EXPLAIN WHY I AM OFTEN PERCEIVED AS AN EMOTIONAL ICICLE? “A STUFFED SHIRT” AS SOME OF MY OWN COLLEGE CLASSMATES RUMORED IT? HAD I BECOME SO DISTANCED FROM OTHERS SINCE MY FATHER’S DEATH? DAD WOULD HAVE RELISHED THE MOMENT! I WAS AT A LOSS FOR AN ANSWER.

LAST FALL SEMESTER (2004) ANOTHER STUDENT WHO PARTICIPATED EXTENSIVELY IN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY CLASS, BUT WHO WAS NOT WITHOUT MANY COMPLICATIONS IN HIS LIFE, WAS A VIBRANT COMMUNICATOR. ALTHOUGH I WAS NOT SURE WHAT ADAM’S MAJOR WAS, I WITNESSED

BOTH HIS READINESS TO CONTRIBUTE HEAVILY TO CLASS DISCUSSION AND READ HIS WELL-WRITTEN ESSAYS. DURING THE SEMESTER HE STOPPED OFTEN AT MY OFFICE TO EXPLAIN WHY HE MISSED A CLASS, OR THAT HE HAD CUT HIS FINGER ON THE DELI MEAT SLICER AT HIS PARENTS' BUSINESS AND WOULD MISS CLASS. WHEN HE WALKED INTO THE OFFICE, HE DID NOT SHAKE HANDS BUT INSTEAD EXTENDED BOTH ARMS TO EMBRACE ME. LITTLE DID I REALIZE HE MIGHT BE REACHING OUT FOR MORE ANSWERS TO ISSUES IN HIS LIFE THAN HE ADMITTED. IT NEVER CROSSED MY MIND TO QUIZ HIM ABOUT PROBLEMS, FOR HE DELINEATED A PLETHORA OF THOSE—DOMESTIC, FINANCIAL, AND ACADEMIC. AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER ADAM DID NOT WALK INTO THE OFFICE AND THANK ME FOR TEACHING HIM AS TIM HAD DONE, BUT I SURVIVED THE END-OF-SEMESTER WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS.

WITH THE TURNOVER IN STUDENTS EACH SEMESTER NEW CLASSES STARTED IN JANUARY AND I NEVER HEARD FROM HIM AGAIN. IT WAS NOT UNTIL AFTER MARCH 6, 2005, WHEN MY DEPARTMENT CHAIR SHOWED ME ADAM'S OBITUARY THAT I LEARNED ADAM DIED OF COMPLICATIONS APPARENTLY BROUGHT ON BY HIS OWN CHOOSING. WHAT EMOTIONAL DEVASTATION, DISAPPOINTMENT, AND ANGER I AND MANY OTHERS FELT! HOW COULD I OR ANY ONE OF US HAVE PREVENTED THIS? WE WERE CHEATED OUT OF ANOTHER ALUMNUS, OUT OF A FRIENDSHIP, OUT OF ANOTHER POTENTIAL JOURNALIST, OR WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE?

WITH THE PLAGUE OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS SWINGING THE WRECKING BALL AT MANY OF OUR CIVILIZATION'S INSTITUTIONS, OUR FAMILIES, OUR RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS, AND OUR HUMANE-NESS, I'M NOURISHED BY THE HUMAN TOUCH I'VE FELT BEFORE AND SINCE ADAM AND TIM. NOW TIM HAS HIS OWN PRIVATE VET PRACTICE WHERE HE ENGAGES IN THE HEALING ARTS FOR ANIMALS. YEARS AGO WHEN I SAW A MINIATURE STETHOSCOPE FOR BIRDS AND SMALL ANIMALS, I BOUGHT IT AND GAVE IT TO HIM AS A GRADUATION PRESENT. "IT STILL COMES IN HANDY," HE TOLD ME RECENTLY; THAT WAS AT HIS FATHER'S FUNERAL, WHERE THE HUMAN TOUCH AGAIN BROUGHT COMFORT TO US BOTH.

BY DR. RICHARD C. ZIEMER, PROFESSOR OF LIBERAL ARTS; DELAWARE VALLEY COLLEGE



Fine
You know,
They all say, "You'll be fine,"
When a test of my strength, willpower, mind and emotional stability comes along
You'll be fine
Don't worry so much
What if my shoelace kicks that hurdle?
And I fall flat on my face?
They'll all look down on me and say,
"We thought you'd be fine."
"You've been fine in the past."
"What happened?"
And then they'll shake their heads and walk away
Leaving me on the unforgiving macadam,
With skinned knees, a split lip, broken and dripping with sweat and salty tears
But I won't be fine
The sweat trickling into my eyes burns
And I'm broken inside
That hurdle just floored me
And I'm not fine
I'll need a little help getting back up on my feet again
Gravity can be so condescending
And I'll need a little more help to walk
Bruises can be so impaling
And I'll need a little comfort to fix my wounded ego
Because I won't be fine
I'll fall down sometimes
OK?
Fine

Michelle Neumann

Photo by Kirstin Schumm

THE TORTILLA TRAIL: OR, YOU DON'T KNOW JACK

Jack was standing at 3300 Wisconsin Avenue mulling over a conversation he had just had with his friends, George and Stephanie Tenet. "Isn't it funny," George had opined mischievously, "that all operatives are guaranteed to have one of four names: Jack or Mike if male, Tracey or Cameron if female?" Steph had burst out in her characteristic giggle, mentally reviewing all the ops she had met, courtesy of their McLean address and her husband's myriad connections. Sure enough, none of them could resist the linguistic humor. They merely wondered if anyone else saw through the thin lexical disguise. Such seemingly innocuous monikers certainly proved easier on a body than spirit gum, Jack thought ruefully, rubbing his sore skin. He had pulled up at the Georgetown Holiday Inn, walked the requisite mile to Wisconsin and Macomb's political hotbed nightspot the Cactus Cantina, and waited somewhat impatiently for the arrival of Andrei Yuriev, the celebrated attaché from Petrovsk. The spirit gum that held his ersatz 'stache in place had alternately itched and burned, causing him to curse softly under his breath. "Forty-six years old, and it doesn't get any easier to keep up this ruse," he thought with a wry smirk, shaking his head at everyone's gullibility. To a person, they all had him pegged as a mild-mannered music professor specializing in Lutheran hymns, but he knew the truth. As for the others, they could think what they liked. Out of sheer habit he began humming a tune about bringing forth the royal diadem and crowning him lord of all when a commotion at the Cantina caught his eye.

It was the irrepressible Karen insisting on patio seating. Jack waved to his colleague (a.k.a. Cameron) and entered the Cantina, an eatery that the President and First Lady had pronounced "the best Tex-Mex in town"—and they should know.

Jack loved D.C., an endlessly fascinating town of museums and monuments, moguls and mayhem. He cherished the complex scent of the city: the whole amalgam of exotic ethnic foods; rain-washed cement, steel, and glass; freshly baked bread; leather; sweat; newspapers; coffee; urine; chlorine; cigars; brand-new souvenirs; car and bus exhaust; aromatic trees, bushes, and rich soil—an earthy, gritty odor of power, promise, and perseverance, of assignments, intrigue, and naked ambition. Hard to describe, really, but Washington had its own distinctive smell, for sure.

Right now, of course, the fresh scent of the Cantina's scrumptious fare beckoned him, and he entered, removed his trench coat, and slid into a booth in eager anticipation of the delectable Paloma Platter.

Just then Yuriev arrived and sat down opposite Jack. The two exchanged pleasantries, ordered their food and drinks, and got down to business. Business involved Lukoil, the brash new player in the area, and the details, although significant, were not really essential. Jack had other business to conduct today, "stuff" to do when the time was right. As Yuriev presented the fine points of his information, Jack found himself thinking about purchasing for his school a theorbo, a nifty medieval lute featuring two sets of strings and an S-shaped neck with two sets of pegs....He grinned. Maintain your cover long enough, and it anneals to your very soul. He was a music-man, through and through. Well, so be it. As a nun might say, sometimes you just get into the habit.

Jack shook his head to intercept Yuriev's line of thought and muttered something about having a bit of a headache. "Must be the Cuervo," he said in dismissal, and proceeded to respond thoughtfully to the attache's report. He had honed that ability, vital to administrators and operatives, of being doubly conscious: A well-trained agent could pay close attention to the person and topic at hand, all the while considering issues of equal importance yet entirely unrelated to the current discussion. Karen also did that well, he thought with a smile.

Perceiving the smile, Yuriev simply assumed that the tequila was working its magic and jovially ordered another round. Jack took a swallow of his Golden Margarita, brushed a stray tortilla chip from his dark t-shirt, and gave a luxurious stretch, sending his arm muscles rippling beautifully. Nearby women, tipsily glancing his way, noted the toned body and smiled appreciatively at him. Though married, he couldn't resist flashing a warm smile in return.

Jack consumed his grilled quail with evident delight. Despite his fondness for good food, especially chocolate-topped vanilla cream donuts and Karen's magnificent brownies, Jack was in excellent shape. As much as he treasured tooling around in his dark green Discovery SE Land Rover, he welcomed the chance to bicycle down in St. Michael's, Maryland, and in D.C.'s own Rock Creek Park. It kept him trim and energized; that was his rationale. Indeed, everything in and near D.C. was done for a reason. The running joke was that the Tidal Basin existed for the express purpose of providing a training circuit for operatives. Animatedly speaking some obscure lingo like Restonese, the ops, disguised as typical tourists, would diligently complete the loop, underscoring their conversation by pointing excitedly to a famous landmark or to a tree branch bobbing in the water. If they tired of that game, they could always go underground, where a wondrously complex network of tunnels and "spiderholes" awaited, coursing through the city. At

each half-mile point stood a cache of MREs, Meals Ready to Eat, some dating back to the '40s, yet still edible in the event of an emergency. Bunks, delousing kits, water, lanterns, toilets, barbells, weapons, everything stood ready, should the need arise. It was great fun scurrying about down there, with no-one above-ground any the wiser. Of course, Jack sometimes went abroad for physical training, too; Arnold Schwarzenegger maintained a fitness retreat in Austria, and Jack headed there frequently for conditioning, using his musical career as a pretext.

Yuriev was just concluding a bawdy tale of mischief at the Kremlin, so Jack erupted into a boyish burst of laughter and hearty recommendations to get together again sometime soon. The attaché took a final swallow, smacked his lips, and departed. Finishing his own margarita, Jack donned his beige trench coat and stood up, thrusting a wad of bills at his waiter and telling him to keep the change.

He sprinted down the stairs to the men's restroom, artfully dodging two giddy women coming from the other room, humming "Tequila" between hysterical peals of mirth. Jack patted his pockets. Yep, two "piccolos." Piccolos were trim little documents, rolled up like pirouline wafers. All the necessary intel was on them. The plan was simple: Enter the room, give Nigel the requisite pic, and skedaddle. That's what he planned to do.

Life had plans of its own. As Jack nonchalantly entered the restroom looking for his British counterpart, he was forcibly grabbed and slammed into a sink, then whipped about to face his attacker. A huge, swarthy thug in a tight black t-shirt, his tattooed biceps bulging, hissed, "Kay, pal, what's the frequency?"

"Pardon me?" Jack replied softly, affecting an innocent demeanor.

"Where-are-the-goods?" the thug demanded, punctuating his words by jabbing a fleshy finger into Jack's taut chest.

Slowly Jack reached into his coat pocket and handed the thug a pic. As the musclemán looked down to thrust the paper tube into his t-shirt's inside pocket, Jack's lightning reflexes went into overdrive. Summoning all his strength, he shoved the shocked man across the room and into a row of urinals. As the villain bent over in pain, his bruised kidneys throbbing, Jack grabbed him by his hair and pummeled him backwards into the sinks. His sinewy arms rained blow after blow upon the unfortunate "tango." Not for nothing did Jack conduct bands. He valued musical conducting for its cardio-vascular and musculo-skeletal benefits. All those allegros, prestos, and sforzandos had kept his upper body wickedly toned. Just now, Jack was conducting Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat* upon his nemesis. It felt so good, for Jack at least.

As his opponent blacked out, a profoundly surprised expression drained from his face. Hoisting the unconscious man onto his shoulders, Jack nimbly tossed him into the trash bin. Displaced paper flew into the air and executed

graceful arabesques before settling down. Ever neat, the agent scooped up the trash and tossed it atop the goon. From his trench coat pocket he extracted a flask of alcohol and poured it liberally upon the face of the oblivious miscreant.

Now, one problem remained: Where was Nigel? His eyes darting to the stalls, Jack discovered the whereabouts of his contact: During the altercation with the Arab thug, one stall door had remained suspiciously closed. Jack rushed over and jimmied the stall open. In his line of work, one quickly gained the knack of unlocking doors. Inside lay Nigel, gagged and duct-taped, his body straddling the toilet awkwardly.

Rapidly Jack withdrew his X-acto knife and made short work of the restraints. Softly he sang the refrain from the World War Two era song, "Duck And Cover," only he changed it to "Duct and Cover." Nigel's eyes simultaneously expressed relief and amusement. That was Jack, alright.

Grinning back, the agent gently removed the gag from his cohort's mouth, helped him to his feet, and was about to say something clever when the door to the men's room opened. Jack grabbed a piece of tape and secured the stall door. Silently he and Nigel stepped up onto the rim of the toilet bowl, hunched down, and placed their hands on the walls for support. The individual quickly spotted the unconscious and reeking goon sprawled in the garbage can and commented, "Woo-hoo! Tough night, bud?" and then went to a urinal, did his business, and left.

Breathing sighs of relief, Jack and his British accomplice tore off the duct-tape and emerged from the stall. Both looked disheveled but high-spirited. From a coat pocket, Jack removed the correct piccolo. Agents always carried a real document and a fake. The sad sap lying in the trash bin had the pic containing biographical details about Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, for all the good that'd do him. The guy was toast, Jack thought with a grin. He'd return to his station without the right info and....Oh, well. It was not for Jack to worry about.

He gave Nigel the correct pic and immediately Nigel left. In the trash bin, Jack's attacker was beginning to stir. Spurred by a fit of impishness, Jack whipped out his trusty spirit gum, poured it generously onto the thug's body, and, grabbing some paper towels, gently patted him down, activating the tacky goo and pressing him even more securely into the garbage, so that his body looked like a demented taco. "What a sticky mess you're in, kiddo," he exclaimed gleefully. "Oh, and one more thing," he murmured, leaning intimately close to the bin:

I once knew a conductor who was performing at a gig in Philly. The place was full, the crowd was eager, the anticipation mounting. Out he strode onto the stage, introduced himself and the score, waited for the applause

to subside, and then began his work. Just then, wouldn't y'know, the skies let loose—I mean, pouring buckets! The whole auditorium reverberated, as thunder chased the lightning. The lights flickered, browned, then returned full-strength, and so it continued for a half-a-dozen minutes more. A cadence of crashes ensued. Everyone was understandably concerned for their safety. Suddenly with an enormous boom, the ceiling split open and a bolt shot down, right where the maestro was standing! Oh, don't worry—he wasn't hurt. You see, he was a poor conductor.

Speeding to the mirror and running a comb through his tousled hair, Jack left the room a moment later, just as three young men were coming in. They took no particular notice of him, which was just as he wanted it.

He bolted up the stairs and into the main room, where people were discussing why Joe Lieberman always sounded upset and ready to cry. In one of the side rooms, people were analyzing Condi's sartorial splendor and asking whether beautifully tailored suits were a true prerequisite for a position as Secretary of State. Ah, yes: Business as usual at the Cantina. If anyone wondered why a pleasant-looking man in a beige trench coat had stayed in the men's room so long, they weren't letting on.

Covert operations were great fun, thought Jack happily. Sure, they were dangerous, sure, they were sometimes a very real pain in the solar plexus, but for sheer high-stakes adventure, the life of an agent couldn't be beaten.

As Jack prepared to leave, he requested a bag of the Cantina's tortilla chips to go. He opened the door and emerged into the sweet slanting sunlight of an early D.C. evening. As usual, a flock of tree sparrows awaited at Wisconsin and Macomb. They knew a good treat when they saw it. Jack tossed a handful to the sidewalk for them to feast on. An act of kindness? Sure, but it was also a signal to the person across the street, leaning against a building, reading a section of the Post. Almost imperceptibly, the man nodded, folded his paper, and crossed the street to accept a handshake. "Hey, how's life in the fast lane?" Jack asked playfully.

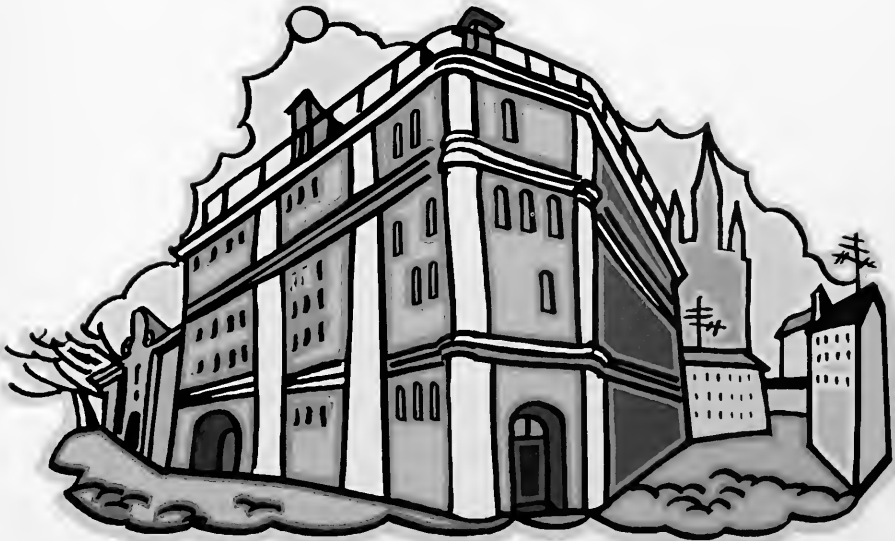
To anyone passing by or savoring a meal on the Cantina's patio, it looked like a simple greeting of two good friends, nothing more. But nothing is as it seems in Spy City. Karen perceived the signal from her colleague and prepared to depart on an adventure of her own.

Dr. Karen Schramm

That Corner

See me standing there
Looking stranded and lost
Who'd think that my world would
Pay such a pricey cost
For just waiting on that corner
Hoping you'll come around and say hi
For just waiting on that corner
Watching my life pass me by.
See those shiny tears upon my face
Look at how I laugh when I want to cry
Why do the days go on at such a slow pace
Promised you would never say goodbye
For just waiting on that corner
Hoping you'll stop telling me lies
For just waiting on that corner
Listening as my heart slowly dies
See me there lying down
Look at me and my clenched fists
Always was lost and never was found
Not so sure anymore if it's you I miss

For just waiting on that corner
Hoping we'll be alright
For just waiting on that corner
Watching day turn into night.
See my skin get red as fire
Look at all our dreams fall and shatter
Waiting for my body to actually get tired
Seems like nothing anymore matters
For just waiting on that corner
What am I waiting for?
For just waiting on that corner
Won't see me on that corner no more. O...



A FAIRY TALE

IT'S 2A.M. AND THE PRINCE IS GONE
HE DIDN'T TURN INTO A PUMPKIN
INSTEAD, SHE LOOKS DOWN TO FIND A GOURD LYING AT HER FEET
BENDING OVER, SHE PICKS UP THE SMALL OBJECT
AND STUFFS IT IN HER POCKET
SHE LOCKS HIM UP IN A CUPBOARD,
IN CASE IT WOULD BE OPENED ONE DAY
AND THE GOURD WOULD BE HUMAN ONCE MORE
KNOCK THREE TIMES ON THE CUPBOARD DOOR
DOES A SOUND FROM WITHIN ANSWER THE CALL?
THINKING BACK TO THAT NIGHT,
WAS IT A DREAM OR REALITY?
"IT'S TRUE," SHE SAYS, "PRINCES DO EXIST."
"THEY JUST MIGHT NOT STICK AROUND."
SHE GLANCES FORLORNLY AT THE WHITE WOODEN DOOR.
TIME PASSES ON AND THE DUST COLLECTS UPON THE KEY
IT HAS NOT TURNED THE LOCK FOR SOME TIME
SHE FEELS THE WEEKS MOVE ON
THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF LIFE KEEP HER BUSY
AND WHAT OF THAT WHICH LIES WITHIN THE WOODEN BOX?
SHE CASUALLY RAPS ON THE AGED BOX
AND TO HER SURPRISE, A VOICE ANSWERS
"I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HERE, RESIDING IN YOUR HEART."
SHE RUSHES TO OPEN THE DOOR,
ONLY TO FIND A DESICCATED REMNANT OF THE GOURD
ALL IS LOST SHE FEARS
WHERE HAS HE GONE?
A KNOCK THREE TIMES AT THE DOOR AWAKENS HER
SHE ANSWERS IT TO SEE HIM STANDING THERE HOLDING A KEY,
IT WAS SHE THAT LOCKED HERSELF AWAY
IT'S 2A.M. AND THE PRINCESS HAS RETURNED
SHE TAKES OFF HER GLASS SLIPPERS AND STANDS JUST AS SHE IS
ARM IN ARM, THEY STEP OUT INTO THE NIGHT,
NO LONGER A PRINCE AND A PRINCESS
HE SAYS, "A FAIRY TALE IS ALL WELL AND GOOD, AS LONG AS YOU DON'T TRAP YOURSELF IN IT."

MICHELLE NEUMANN



*Sparkle, shimmer, dip and glow;
Males above, females below.
Engaged in timeless flashing dances,
they meet together and not by chance.
For tiny eyes,
soon recognize,
each others' glowing golden prize.*
By Chris Tipping

“Out with the Old, In with the New”

Out with the old, In with the new

Toss that man like a worn-out shoe

With his dirty laces and his no shine

With that man I wouldn't waste my time.

Out with the old, In with the new

That man smells like dried-out glue

He has no job and owns no home

I would be better off on my own.

Out with the old, In with the new

Isn't that what the last one put me through?

Hiding his secrets with lies and excuses

I don't know whom he thought that would amuse.

Out with the old, In with the new

What is this one trying to do?

He probably still lives with his momma

Sorry, but I don't deal with that drama.

Out with the old, In with the new

Look at that cute one hanging with his crew

Bet he's cocky and thinks he's too cool

Those types are hard at following my rules.

Out with the old, In with the new

Augghh! His breath smells of rotten stew

Talk about taking a personal hygiene test

Take a few of these mints and save the rest.

Out with the old, In with the new

Finally I see a good one out of the few

Let me give him a wink and a little smile

I think this new one might be worth my while.

Zakia Clements



Seasoned Men

*The bright colored leaves fall today.
Tears from trees, weeping for the lost.
The red of blood, the orange and brown of bandage.
They gather together, covering the cries and moans
that echo through rows of white marble stones.*

*In summer heat, under brave blue skies,
the grassy hills turn a lavender dew.
Men lie gasping, brother against brother,
much death comes, slow and mournful.*

*The trees shade all and yearly give treasure
To those who gave their last full measure.*

Jimi McNeel

Photo by Katherine Darger

A Breeze Blows

A breeze blows, a single red leaf is carried aloft.

Why, out of the thousands of leaves lying around, was this singular leaf carried away on the breeze?

Is it because it was more deserving than the others?

Had it been more grateful and gratuitous during its life?

Why?

A breeze blows, a single red leaf is carried aloft.

Why can't this leaf escape from its prison?

Why is it simply tossed about, never being allowed to wander outside its bars?

Had it caused grief and pain during its life?

Why?

A breeze blows, a single red leaf is picked up by a passerby.

Why must this leaf go from one prison to another?

For what reason is it not allowed to die in peace?

Must it undergo some great physical test to prove its worthiness in order for it to enter its rightful resting place?

Why?

A breeze blows, a single soul passes out of existence.

Why, out of the billions of souls around the world, must this soul die?

Is it because it was needed by some greater entity?

Is it an act of mercy sparing it from a miserable existence?

Why?

A breeze blows, a single old man sits on a bench wondering where his life has gone. “Why hadn’t I traveled more? Why didn’t I love more? How did I let my life turn out this way?”

He remembers all his mistakes and ponders his regrets.

He doesn’t think of all of the good things that his life has offered.

Why?

A breeze blows, a single old lady sits in her chair staring distantly out the window.

She smiles, remembering her first and only love, and then cries, remembering his passing. She then becomes filled with warmth, joy, and happiness remembering the birth of her children and the love they gave each other. And then her heart aches, wondering why they’ve left her in this place and never call anymore.

Why?

A breeze blows, a single red leaf is carried aloft.

Caught, alone, by the relentless wind, turned and whirled about.

Never allowed to stop and rest, never allowed to set foot upon the earth.

Destined to wander the vast world alone, forever without a soul mate, someone to call its own.

Why?

John A. Knouse

Photo by Alexis Ritter

Levee?

The sun rises, shining on your beauty,

Your auburn hair blowing,

Your smile is warm, your voice sweet music.

You appear so near, laughing all the while,

Yet in your emerald eyes, I see your heartache,

And all your smiles cannot hide your sadness,

For the love you've spent in vain.

John A. Knowse

“The True Story of Humpty Dumpty”

It was on a beautiful Sunday morning in Old King Cole’s castle that our story begins. Old King Cole always requests a cheese and pumpkin omelet, two feet in diameter, for his Sunday breakfast. His faithful cook, Ferdinand, always prepares the fattening breakfast for his plump king with the finest of the eggs that the kingdom’s chickens can provide. This morning he found a particularly large, white egg waiting patiently in the chicken house.

“Why, this egg is fit for a king!” chuckled the cook as he gathered his cooking materials. First he put out all of his cooking utensils and then set to work on cracking the eggs for the omelet. As he got closer to cracking the large white egg he heard a dim voice.

“Now what could that be? The maids are all out preparing the table and I am the only cook awake at this hour.” Ferdinand wondered. “Oh well, it must be my imagination!”

“Please sir, let me go. What did I ever do to you that you want to break me all apart and eat my yolk?” the little voice said.

“There it is again! I must have been out in the heat too long yesterday because I swear I just heard that large egg talk!” the startled cook exclaimed.

“HELLO!!!! Can’t you hear me?? Let me go! That frying pan is so hot! How would you like it if I were to fry you up at this early hour?” the voice exclaimed.

Just then the cook picked up the large white egg to find that it had grown two blue eyes, a nose, two feet, two legs, and a very loud mouth. Startled at this freakish sight, the cook almost dropped the talking egg onto the stone floor.

“Hey! Watch it, buddy! I am not made out of rubber, you know! Just put me down nice and easy and I won’t bite your pudgy finger,” the loud egg demanded.



Slowly, and as carefully as possible, the cook placed the egg-boy on a washcloth. The egg started to stand on wobbling feet and began brushing his gleaming, white shell off from the cook's greasy fingers. He then walked unsteadily over to the stunned cook and stuck out his pencil-thin arm.

"The name's Humpty-Dumpty! Nice to meet you," the egg said.

"Umm, Hi. I, my name is Ferdinand." The cook stuttered and stuck out a finger that the egg took in his tiny hand and shook.

The two stood, staring at each other for a few minutes in disbelief until HurnptyDumpty said,

"Well, I really must be off on my quest now. You know that you woke me up from a very peaceful sleep that I was having. I always try to stay in a hen house so no one will find my unusual presence out of the ordinary."

The cook remained in his stooped-over, jaw-dropped position for a few more seconds and then blinked back to reality.

"Oh, yes. How interesting," he said dreamily.

Just then Old King Cole, who was a very merry old soul, came ambling into the kitchen. He still had on his large red robes and was fiddling with his golden crown on his head.

"Why, good morning, Ferdinand! How is my cheese and pumpkin omelet coming along? I have been so hungry despite the fact that I ate that whole turkey at the feast last night."

With that the King let out a loud guffaw, which shook the pots and pans hanging from the ceiling. This startled the cook back to attention and he quickly turned to face the king and made a polite bow towards him.

"Oh. YYess Sir. Sorry Sir, I have been having trouble with the oven. It seems to have broken from that feast last night," the cook lied.

However, the King was not listening and instead was focused on the large white egg on the counter.



Saliva glistened on his plump lips and his eyes widened to twice their original size. A low rumble became audible in the King's stomach.

"Ferdinand! What a marvelous egg that you have found for me this morning! I cannot wait to sink my teeth into that juicy little fellow!"

At that a small yelp was heard from the direction of Humpty Dumpty. And the cook quickly turned and threw a towel over the egg to hide it from the King's view.

"Oh, yes, sir, that egg is quite marvelous. I will make sure that it is properly seasoned and prepared for your unique palate. I will put the pumpkin, Swiss cheese, and little bit of licorice on it. Just like you love it!" the cook exclaimed as he gently turned the king and pushed him out the kitchen door into the great dining hall.

Slowly the King was able to tear his hunger-crazed eyes from the large egg and he returned to the dining hall, where he proceeded to munch on leftover steak bones and potatoes, which he saved, from the previous night's feast.

"Whew. That was a close one! I thought for a second there that I was going to be swallowed egg-shell and all!" Humpty-Dumpty whispered.

"What am I to do? I cannot deny the King's wishes but I also cannot deny my heart and throw a true freak of nature like you into my frying pan!" Ferdinand cried.

"Hey, watch it with the 'freak' part. I can't help it that my mother was the goose that laid magical golden eggs. All my brothers and sisters were a beautiful golden color and didn't have all these human-like features as I do. They were just golden and normal. I am doomed forever to walk the Earth looking like a shrunk human-boy with a bad shape. All that I ever wanted was to be a real boy. One who could run with long legs, not stubby ones like mine! Or have a real face with flesh and bone, not slimy yellow goo. I just want to have a



body that humans won't want to fry up every time they see me!" poor Humpty cried.

"There, there. I won't fry you. I want to help you. I know that one of the maids here at the kingdom is a little bit of a 'witch' and she may be able to help you!" the caring cook said soothingly.

With that Ferdinand gently wrapped the egg in a towel and proceeded to search for the maid named Helga. Helga was a descendent from the long line of witches reaching back to the time of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves. However, Helga had vowed never to poison an apple or a comb as her great-great grandmother had done. Instead she practiced her magic on the king. When he wanted to look handsome for a ball or a feast she made those extra pounds melt away, literally with just a wave of a wand and a few magic words.

"Helga! You must help me! I have someone who needs a transformation!" Ferdinand called after Helga as she tittered about in the main hall of the castle preparing for another ball for the King.

"I am so busy right now, Ferdi. I must make the King one hundred pounds lighter by tonight or I don't think he will fit into his suit!" the busy Helga exclaimed.

"But look, Helga! This poor, helpless egg wants to be a little boy before the king eats him for breakfast!" Ferdinand insisted.

"Excuse me? I heard an egg wants to be a boy? Have you been eating those magical muffins the king hides in his dresser again?" Helga inquired.

Getting annoyed, the cook displayed Humpty Dumpty, who shivered with fright and dared not open his eyes to look at the witch.

"My, my! I haven't seen one in years. Where ever did you find him? Oh, he is just the cutest little thing!" Helga cooed and gently picked Humpty up in her long fingers.

"Will you help me?" Humpty pleaded with tear-glistened eyes "I just want to be a real boy and I might be eaten if I don't become one very soon!"

"I might have the right potion to help you but you have to promise not to let the



king see you in this state because he will gobble you up,” Helga warned.

With that Helga pulled out a large square suitcase, which contained hundreds of jars of ingredients for potion making. There were pig’s feet, lizard tails, slugs and more, all waiting to be tossed into the perfect potion.

As Helga set to work putting her ingredients into a large black kettle, she sang a little tune.

“The tail of a quail
And fluke of a whale,
A little bit of slug-slime,
Will make you feel fine.
Mix them in to boil,
Watch the snakeskin coil.
Add some ear of pig,
And a touch of rotten fig.
Rise smoke and foul smell,
To complete this human spell.”

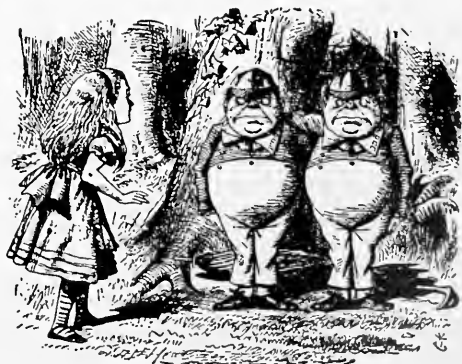
The ingredients were beginning to mix and juice up. They turned a dark, pea- green color and set off a putrid smell. Ferdinand and Humpty-Dumpty sat watching the witch working with a disgusted expression on their faces.

“If she wants me to drink that stuff, I am outta here!” Humpty exclaimed as he watched a large green bubble rise to the top of the stew and pop, sending an oily film across the room.

“Now, the potion will be complete with a pinch of my grandmother’s special spice: Cod eyeball and ground onion!” Helga said as she emptied a packet of tan substance into the potion.

“The time has come for you, little egg. If your true wish is to be a human boy, you must jump into this potion and you will emerge renewed,” Helga informed him.

“Hold on! Do I have ‘Gullible’ written on my



forehead? I know what happens to eggs when they jump into a boiling pot of liquid, they come out dead!" Humpty protested.

"This potion is different. You will not even feel hot because this potion is magical, remember. I promise that it won't hurt you at all," Helga insisted. "Unless, you aren't as set on becoming a human as I thought you were."

Humpty stared at Helga hard. He fixed his eyes on the witch, then on the boiling pot. He wasn't able to decide whether to trust a witch or his instinct as an egg. Then he thought of how lovely it was going to be to have real legs and arms and a real body and he nodded his head.

"Alright. I will do it. But if I get boiled alive in that pot I will never speak to you again!" he exclaimed and allowed himself to be placed gently into the liquid.

Surprisingly, he didn't feel a thing. It felt like he was swimming in a lukewarm pool. There was no intense burning feelings or pain as he expected. He laughed out loud and started to do the backstroke.

"Hey, this isn't so bad after all! So, how long do I stay in here?" he asked.

"Only a few more seconds and then you will shed that shell and be a real boy," Helga told him as she cleaned up her potion supplies and put them into her suitcase.

Humpty continued to swim around and began to feel all tingly. His eyes moved more easily

and his fingers and toes grew larger. He was beginning to feel a real change just as he heard loud footsteps and the creak of the door.

"There you are! I have been waiting for my pumpkin and cheese omelet for over twenty minutes and I had to eat the dinner platter for tonight's feast to satisfy my appetite," King Cole chuckled guiltily.

Suddenly he spotted Humpty floating in the boiling potion. His eyes grew large and he salivated. His hands started to reach out and a smile



became visible on his plump lips. Humpty had his back to the king and didn't realize what was stalking him.

"I see you have made this lovely egg soup for me out of that enormous egg from this morning. How absolutely divine of you! I will eat it right now. I do not mind if it is undercooked," the king said and moved closer to the pot. He reached his pudgy fingers out and got closer to plucking Humpty out of the water.

"HELP!" cried Humpty and Ferdinand picked him up before the king reached him and rolled him gently out the door.

The king followed faithfully, thinking that this was part of the egg-eating ritual. He ran in a stooped position after Humpty, whose legs had grown stronger and longer in the potion. Humpty ran quickly over the grass in the courtyard and towards the gate wall.

The king began to get angry at this fast-food business and called for his guards to chase his breakfast.

"Guards! Follow that egg! I am famished and I cannot run anymore!" the king bellowed.

His men rode upon horseback after the egg. Humpty Dumpty gasped for air as he reached the eight-foot gate wall. He took a brave leap and landed unsteadily on the top of it. The King's men screeched their horses to a halt and planned what to do next. They didn't want the egg to fall and splatter because the king would certainly kill them if they ruined his breakfast. So they devised a plan to have two men on each side of the wall and catch him when he fell.

"Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall,

While the King's men waited for him to fall.

He grew faint from his run,

And his legs felt like they weighed a ton.

He then dropped off the side of the wall,

And had a great fall.

All the King's horses and all the King's men,

Couldn't put the poor, cracked Humpty back together again."

Fearing their future deaths for having ruined the King's breakfast



egg, the men turned their horses and ran away from the smashed egg.

Just then a strange thing happened. Humpty Dumpty wasn't smashed at all! Instead his old eggshell had just broken away to reveal the new body of a ten-year-old boy who had bright, blue eyes and long legs and arms.

"I'm a real boy! The potion worked! I'm a real boy!" Humpty exclaimed and jumped for joy on his new legs.

"Hey kid, that was pretty brave how you scared away all of the king's men like that," a strange, green-clad man told Humpty. "What's your name? I have been trying to get rid of those guys for many years and you did it so easily."

"My name is Humpty-Dumpty! Nice to meet you, Mr. Uh, What's your name?"

"I am Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest. How would you like to join my band of brothers to steal from the rich and give to the poor?" Robin inquired as he offered a hand to Humpty.

"That sounds fantastic, Sir! I would love to get back at that mean old King Cole. He tried to eat me, you know," Humpty said as he walked next to Robin towards the woods.

"That's perfect, son. We need someone who knows the inside of the castle like you do working for us. But we need to come up with a better name than Humpty-Dumpty for you," Robin observed and Humpty nodded.

"How about John? I always liked that name. It is so strong and honest," Robin asked.

"Yes. I like that. John sounds like a great name. Thank you, Robin! I have wanted to get rid of my name for so long!" Humpty Dumpty told him.

"Well, you will be John. And since you are still small, I will call you my "Little John." Robin smiled.

With that the two new friends walked onto Sherwood Forest where they would make history of their own.

THE END

Becky Rebmann

Encounter With a Dragon

I have been a researcher and photographer of grizzly bears for about four years now, - and I am ranked among the best in the world when it comes to photography of bears in the wild. My efforts contribute to the cause of conservation and education about these majestic animals and their pristine environments. For me, the most fascinating aspect of grizzly behavior occurs at the annual salmon runs, when all bears in the area temporarily abandon their solitary lifestyles and gather at the rivers and creeks. The bears are there to feast on the legions of salmon swimming to their breeding grounds in an attempt to build up fat reserves for the winter.

Every year, I go to the same location to observe, document, and photograph the grizzly bears as well as other wildlife attending the salmon runs. My latest expedition, however, led to an extreme encounter that has forever changed my life and career.

As usual, I was traveling to my destination alone. I knew that traveling alone in such an area was generally seen as a bad idea by most people, but I was very confident, as I was an outdoorsman with impeccable survival skills. I have hiked in this terrain for over four years, and I knew the area like the back of my hand. I traveled lightly, carrying only the barest of necessities for my trip: my notebook and pen, a couple of Power Bars for energy, and my trusty camera, custom fitted with a clip to attach to my belt.

As I neared the river, I began to sense that something was amiss, heard no splashing, no growls - not even a bald eagle could be seen flying above the river. I began to worry: what if there were poachers in the area? Suddenly, I remembered a few locals warning me about a giant lizard being in the area, but quickly dismissed the thought. I had shrugged the warning off as some kind of folk tale. I knew for a fact that there were no large reptiles indigenous to this part of the world: it's cool in these parts, and even if the contrary were true, no living lizard, not even the komodo dragon, would ever grow large enough to threaten a full grown, half-ton bear.

I passed through a dense thicket of trees, which was my little secret path that would take me right to the water's edge. Finally there, I scanned my surroundings. As suspected, the entire area was derelict of life except for the scores of salmon and the insects. Not a single bear was to be seen, which was extremely unusual because this area always attracted the most bears, as the water was quite shallow, making it easy to catch the large fish. Unable to believe my own eyes, I looked around one last time. And that's when I saw it.

I had missed it entirely until it moved, but because of its large size, I was amazed that I had missed it at all. On top of that, the creature was no more than one hundred feet away. The creature may have appeared to the casual observer as a huge lizard, but this thing sure as hell was no lizard. Just from seeing the two horns protruding from the back of its head and the two well developed, bat-like wings folded at its sides, I immediately knew that this was a dragon I was looking at.

The creature at which I gazed was beautiful beyond words, yet terrifying at the same time. Clad in shining gunmetal blue scales, the dragon stood as high as a horse, probably slightly higher,

at the double shoulders where the forelimbs and wings joined the body. The long muscular neck added even more height. Except for its obsidian hued horns, the dragon's body was devoid of any other ornamentation, giving it a very sleek appearance. Though lithe in form, the dragon was nonetheless well muscled: its limbs were bulging with muscle, and its long sinuous tail was undoubtedly very powerful. Knowing what large monitor lizards were capable of doing with their tails, one could only imagine the amount of power contained in the tail of the beast before me. I guessed the total length of the creature was well over thirty feet, possibly even forty. Forty feet was much smaller than most dragons described in mythology (this one was probably young) but was still easily large enough to scare off any bear and possibly even large enough to prey on bears themselves, even if most of that forty feet was tail.

Yet this dragon was not interested in bears, as it was here, striking at the salmon as I've seen herons do with smaller fish. The dragon struck again at the water at lightning speed, and when it came back up, I saw that it had a large salmon struggling in its jaws. I watched in fascination as the dragon tossed the fish into the air, caught it by the head, and swallowed it without difficulty. As it lowered its head for the next catch, its eyes fell upon me.

My heart started racing, and I prayed that this dragon didn't see humans as food, because if it did, there'd be no chance of escaping that thing.

When it first saw me, the dragon was obviously surprised, as its eyes widened slightly and it took half a step backwards. Quickly recovering from its initial shock, it tilted its head in curiosity. Even from this distance, I could still sense a vast intelligence in those eyes as they studied me. Then our eyes locked, and we stared at one another for what seemed like an eternity. My brain finally started working normally again, and I slowly reached for my camera. My fingers couldn't find the camera, so I had to glance down. When I grabbed the camera and looked back up, the dragon was gone.

Where did it go? There was no trace of the dragon anywhere except a few ripples where it once stood. It couldn't possibly have dived underwater; the water wasn't even knee deep, and there was no sign of it in the air or on the opposite shore. How could something that big move that fast and silently?

Disheartened, I turned to leave- and was face-to-snout with the dragon, which had been standing right behind me. I involuntarily let out a gasp at the speed of this creature, such speed that should have been impossible. I looked down at the dragon's forefeet and its large curved talons, talons that could cut me in two with a flick if it wished to do so. Feverishly, I looked up at the creature's jaw, jaws that were undoubtedly very powerful. Although its mouth was closed, I knew it concealed sharp cutting fangs. With such teeth, coupled with the powerful jaws, the dragon was perfectly capable of obliterating my entire head with a single snap.

Finally, I shifted my gaze to the eyes of the creature that was about to end my life. My fears of getting savagely killed, however, vanished once I locked eyes with the dragon. I would never forget those light gray cat-slit eyes for the rest of my life. Those silvery orbs held a vast intelligence within them, perhaps greater than my own. I realized that this creature did not wish to harm me, but was simply curious: I was probably the first human being it had ever closely encountered. I was now intensely curious, and being a biologist only heightened my fascination with this impressive animal.

The dragon made the first move, its horned head snaking down to inquisitively sniff my face. I felt a slight suction pull at my cheek as this powerful beast investigated me, its sharp, deep inhalations breaking the silence of the moment.

Tentatively, I reached out a hand to pet the creature on the head. Sensing my intentions, the dragon lowered its head to give me better access. When my hand finally touched its skin, I found the feeling of its scales unique: the best description I could come up with was that it was like touching a hybrid of metal and crocodilian leather. The skin was very warm to the touch, and when I started to rub the area behind its ear opening, the dragon began to purr like some gigantic cat. The creature obviously enjoyed this contact.

Now comfortable in the dragon's presence, I didn't even flinch as its huge foreclaw moved up to grasp my arm. As this clearly sentient being investigated my arm, lifting it up and prodding and sniffing it, I scrutinized its forepaw. Its forefoot was truly amazing and alien: it was distantly similar yet totally different from my own hand. It possessed four digits, with the outer two having the appearance and function of double thumbs. The underside of the clawed hand was covered in spiny scales or spicules, remarkably similar to the feet of bald eagles and other fish-eating raptors. The claw gripping my arm was undoubtedly an efficient instrument of death, yet it handled my fragile limb with such dexterity and gentleness that I did not feel even the slightest discomfort.

I then remembered my camera and wanted desperately to take photos of this magnificent, intelligent creature. As if it read my mind, the dragon stepped back a few feet, sat on its haunches, and shifted its silvery gaze toward my camera. This immediately prompted me to unclip the camera from my belt, load it with fresh film, and aim it at my target. The dragon nodded, then puffed out its chest, raised its head, and spread its wings in a most regal pose.

Adjusting myself in order to fully fit the dragon into the picture, I pressed the shutter, forgetting to turn off the flash. The resulting flash startled the creature, causing it to flinch back in surprise and to shake off the disorientation caused by the flash. It looked at me questioningly, but resumed its pose when it realized I intended no harm.

I silently apologized as I switched off the flash, sighing in relief. I was lucky in more ways than one: with any other large potentially dangerous animal, my negligence would have either scared the animal off, or the flash could have triggered an aggressive response with potentially grim consequences for me.

Fortunately, the rest of the photo shoot went very well. The dragon even allowed me to get close-up shots of its fangs and talons without hesitation. I continued to shoot until I ran out of film. The dragon seemed to enjoy the entire session, actively posing and showing off for the camera.

The dragon moved to the water's edge after the photo shoot, passing by me on the way. Once at the water's edge, the beast turned to face me, and I felt a strange presence in my mind. It didn't surprise me too much when I realized that the dragon was communicating with me telepathically. It was like words and images were being projected into my head, and I understood everything clearly.

It, no, he told me that there were others of his kind existing on this world, but they kept very

low profiles because they risked hostility if they revealed themselves to the humans. He knew all about human myths of dragons, especially the ones that portrayed them as evil and bloodthirsty monsters, and therefore was fully aware of what would happen if humans realized dragons truly existed: human ignorance and fears would escalate into hatred and violence against dragons. Dragon hunts would commence, and some of the smaller, younger dragons such as himself would be tortured, experimented on, and killed if they were caught. The dragon then informed me that such actions would provoke the wrath of his immensely powerful elders, all of whom were well over two hundred feet in length, according to the images in my head. War would follow, and would result in high casualties on both sides, but the humans would suffer infinitely worse than the dragons would. In addition to humans and dragons, countless plants and animals would be caught in the crossfire.

The dragon explained that he sensed that I was different from most other humans, for he could in fact read minds. Judging from the emotions sent to me, the dragon was as wary and curious as I was, especially since he was caught off guard. But he soon learned that I was trustworthy. He wished for humans and dragons to coexist peacefully and wanted me to show the photos I took to the public as a first contact. The dragon then admitted that he greatly enjoyed his first encounter with a human, and I told him likewise.

After politely displaying to me the draconian equivalent of a bow, the dragon crouched low and used his powerful hind legs to launch himself into the air, unfurling his massive wings. After hovering for a second, he took off at astonishing speed that should have been impossible for an animal his size. Within seconds, he was completely out of sight. I stared at the sky dumbfounded until I regained my senses and decided to call it a day and go back to the inn.

About a year has passed since that first encounter. I had written an article and submitted it along with the photos to National Geographic Magazine. My experience gained me a lot of publicity: I was constantly interviewed by other magazines and even by television shows. Some thought my encounter was a hoax, even with the photos, while others immediately took an avid interest in dragons. Some had even begun to support my cause of introducing dragons and humans to each other. Needless to say, all the publicity has made me rich enough to put my children through school without difficulty. That is, if I had them! The best thing is that my efforts to unite humans and dragons peacefully are going much better than I had hoped.

As for that dragon I met, I haven't seen or heard from him since that time, although I hope that we will meet again someday. Even meeting a different dragon would be great. Perhaps if dragons and humans were to finally live side by side within my lifetime, that hope will come true.

Loren Garnet-Lewis





Leaving

*I will go to my Death
But not quickly.
I will hold on
Fighting the vagaries of my existence,
Making a difference
Until the end.*

*I will go to my Death
But not quietly.
With my Russian amber
And my Grecian gold.
I will dazzle you with my brilliance
And you will remember.*

Barbara Murphy Grimes

Frustration

*god...
any god...
please show me the way...
I am lost...
in the shadows...
the deep is pulling me farther and farther from the light..
the darker it is the more I like what I see...
please give me some hint that you care at all...
even just a little...
this lamb is missing from the flock...
the struggle is getting harder...
I am losing the fight...but not defeated...
I still keep some hope alive...
but without any kindling my spark will go out...
light my path or I become part of the shadow...
the things I once despised are becoming my future...
I am fighting it less and less...
show me your truth or I will believe it is all a lie...
I need a sign...
but until then I am nothing...*

Katie Sickles

Photo by Lindsay Cropper

A Loner's Soul

I've actually been inside your mind,
an ordeal I almost didn't survive,
Never predicted one knock on your door
would take me on my life's wildest ride.

Never thought that was a magic mirror.
Never thought it would show me such terror.
I wanted answers but never this way.
Note to self: be careful what you wish for.

Those frozen eyes you glare through every day;
that glance of stone that, any prying, slays;
those ears, dead and deaf, to all questions asked:
burying your secrets here, where they stay.

And no one will know how weary a task
it is to wear your serene, stoic mask.
Now, the truth shatters your steadfast pretense.
How long did you think your façade would last?

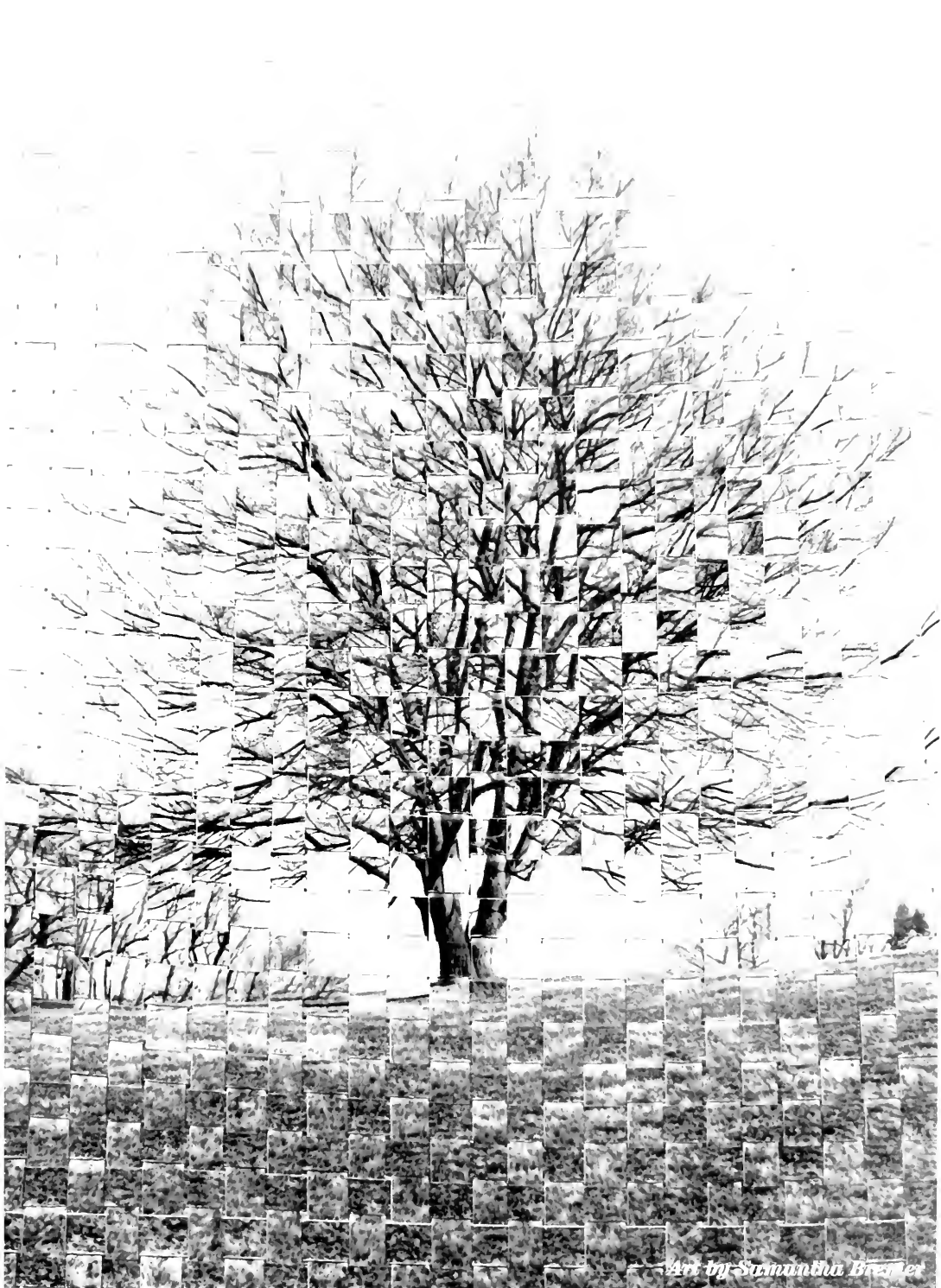
Today a demon broke through your defense.
Today I saw you fight, cry, smile, vent;
beaten, defeated, ready to resign;
a power that, all my knowledge, transcends.

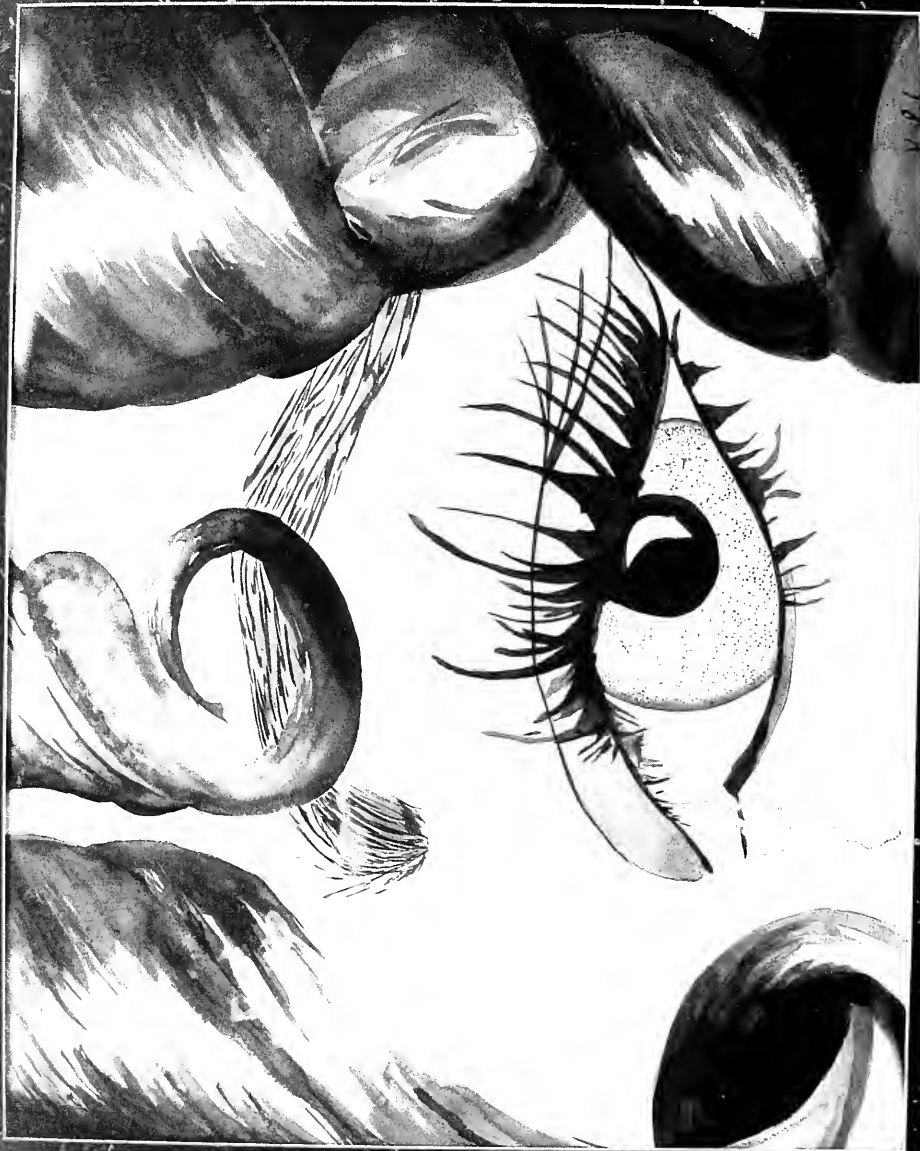
Now, I understand what secrets you hide.
Now I know what shiver goes up your spine
whenever someone asks, "What is with her?"
ever since I have been inside your mind.

Jill Geisler



Art by Kirstin Schumm





Blood & Tears

*The wolf growls from deep within
as the anger from our mother earth
begins to surge up through her paws.*

*The thunderous sound echoes around the empty woods
as the drops of an innocent's blood seep into the dry soil.*

*The world replies, a long and lonely howl,
the sorrows of a thousand already lost...*

Then it begins to rain...

Katie Sickles



Art by John Knouse

Agapé

*Philia is the simple love of friends
that brings only joy, no heartbreak, no tears;
all the fun without the adrenaline;
pure love with no hormones to interfere.*

*Eros is that wild, romantic love
that makes me insane, frightened, and jealous;
infects my mind, stops my heart, stirs my blood;
too intense for friendship, too pure for lust.*

*Agapé, that unconditional love:
patient, unbreakable, everlasting.
Agapé, the highest love meant for us:
all powerful, eternal, unfailing.*

*Beyond Friendship or Romance, this we call
Agapé, the greatest love of all.*

Jill Geisler

Who's In? Who's Out?

Who, I, had the strength,
to turn this earthly orb.
To whisper winds to motion
in silent thunderclap.

A Faith to see unseen
not to touch the wound.

Who, I, had the power,
to see truth in each event.
To guide dark nights gently,
a light to sojourn soul.

A hope in time unmeasured,
in Kingdom reeled in joy.

Who, I, am the might,
to bound soul to Love.
Temperate, true and holy,
Incarnate in every heart.

A Love unfathoming mystery
in Mercy face to face.

Who, I, am the God inside
singed and burnt to gold.
Love's final resting place
in His arms to hold.

Jim McGee

Art by Lindsay Cropper

We are the others

Rip, shred, tally wackle, storm
Why should they be kind to us?
Tripped and buried by their norm,
Tried to get behind us.

"Get out of the way, little one,"
That's what they advise us.
Better not to be outdone,
Never to deny us.

We are the others, turn around,
Your side of the fence though.
Wave your weapons o'er your crown
Those barriers move to and fro.

Nay, 'tis good and righteous for us as one,
To take a sledge to that swarm;
Tripped and buried? A home run!
Rip, shred, tally wackle, storm.

-Sean Dallas

Un-Ending Calling

Here I sit alone, my dear
Waiting for you – lost within hear
The light flickering...placing shadows on walls
As my soul sends this un-ending call

Notes, I can hear them returning from distance
My heart knows no bounds – is without resistance
And from these walls I travel afar
Searching for melodies amongst the stars

On I go as the notes combine
Some descending in various rhymes
From chaos is born this powerful surge
As on I go following urge


For you exist even if lost in darkness
Maybe invisible with powers to harness
But I'll search until those notes fall right
Weaving the melody – the music of night...

LMP



Art by Kirstin Schumm

Free and Alive



Crawled out of the cave and into the light
Was greeted by the playful wind that held me so tight
I walked on the path with the shining sun
On my way I went was I the only one
 Feelin' so free and alive
 Into life's sweet waters I dive
 Won't you join me for a swim?
Mmmm skinny dippin' just me and him
 Swirling around in the foam
 Letting smiles and caresses roam
 Continued on my merry way
When I came across waves at play
 They stopped and stared at me
 Asked so where is he?
 I said I didn't know
 And decided to romp and play
 Rolling in that bare earth
Visions of you faded with the dust
 Followed the path 'round a bend
Came upon some chickadees singing a sweet song
 The sweet melody called to me
And said have you found him yet?
 I flew with the chickadees
 High into the great blue sky
 Saw a tiny vision of you
 Walking upon the beach
 Landing on the soft wet sand
 You came to me and said
 Won't you join me for a swim?
 Oh yes, let's ride the waves
 Feelin' so free and alive
 Into life's sweet waters I dive
 Won't you join me for a swim?
Mmmm skinny dippin' just me and him
 Swirling around in the foam
 Letting smiles and caresses roam

Michelle Neumann

Once Upon A Time: An Interview with Jack Kapphan

Some things never change, but more often than not, they will. For the past nineteen years, I've grown into a world dominated by cable television, fast food, cellular phones, the Internet, and pop music. But people like my grandfather, my mother's dan, Jack Miller Kapphan, grew up with a different American, the America of the Great Depression, the Second World War, jazz, and cheaper movies. My grandfather's story is, at certain times, a story of courage, or love, family, or war, but always a story of change.

Jack was born February 28, 1923 in McCandless in southwestern Pennsylvania, with three older brothers: William, Ken, and Howard, ten, eight, and six years older than him, respectively. In the future, he would also have a younger sister, Donna. The four brothers were close growing up: playing a lot of the same sports, helping each other with schoolwork, and never tattling on one another. Being the youngest, Jack was also close to his sister, Donna, so sweet and polite, she would eventually make a great flight attendant. However, that would not save her from losing her job once she got married according to

the law.

Jack's mother, Mary, was a strict homemaker like most wives. Her steadfast philosophy was to let Dad be the disciplinarian, so he was always the one who would whack his kid's calf with a rolled up newspaper for punishment. Jack's father, William, was a utility worker for People's Natural Gas Company. Customers used to pay for gas for their homes by purchasing special coins from the gas company worth a certain

Let tomorrow worry about tomorrow,
for today is the tomorrow
that you worried about yesterday.

-Kathleen Weaver

Home

*Intimate energy and warmth poured from within the café,
Aromas of breads and sweets blending to perfection
Like watercolor sunsets in nearby shop windows;
An old woman crocheting, hands trembling slightly, peering over thin glasses,
The corners of her mouth turned slightly upwards;
A father speaking affectionately to his young son,
Though I could not comprehend his speech, I understood his love;
A soldier standing expressionless in worn boots and a dark green uniform,
A rifle at her side.*

Dusk.

*Candles emerging in windows.
Late afternoon shadows capturing the beauty
Of Jerusalem stone.
Home.*

*Night falls fast, and we drive, fast.
Passing car horns, disrupting dusk's tranquility.
Then—A sound so thunderous, the car trembles.
Frightened. Something in me—
My heart?
Plunges deep into my stomach.
Words spin, roll, tumble out of my father's mouth, but I hear only one.
Bomb.*

The word exudes such power, such potency.

Bomb. Bomb, echoing through every orifice in my body and my mind.

Desperately, I try to swallow. But my mouth is stale, arid.

Maybe I can swallow this moment, I think. Maybe I can swallow fear, violence, hatred

Maybe I can swallow reality.

A scene so surreal, So quiet, so still.

A cloak of silence, a cloud of smoke.

Faceless bodies, sprawled on the ground.

Twelve injured, two dead, said the news later that night.

Numbers. Fine. Great. But their families, their stories?

Too many questions left unanswered.

Mother's voice shattered the barrier of confusion.

A typical mother, telling me that everything was going to be okay.

A typical teenager, telling her that it wasn't.

Clouds in my eyes, I stared out of the car window at nothing

Convincing myself that someday things would be different.

That someday, I would be home again.

Erica Zviklin

Council Rock High School.

Grade 12

Teacher: Ms. Andrea Lamberth

The Late Night Arrest

I was abruptly awakened by the sound of rolling thunder and the sight of blinding lightning. Someone was at the door, and they had a job for me. The door creaked open and my partner, Sam, looked at me. I had been working with Sam for a while now. Whenever a robbery occurred, it was our job to catch the thief. Sam told me about the case tonight, and I sighed to myself, for it was the masked robber. He was some nut-job that wore a mask for dramatic effect and stole from the hardworking farmers near the area. He had escaped from me three times, prior to tonight, and I vowed there wouldn't be a fourth.

We rode the car to the scene of the crime, and I started to get nervous. Car rides always get me anxious; I guess it's just my nature. We arrived at the Henderson's farm and we got out of the car. I went to the chicken pen, where the robber broke into. I don't know anyone who would steal livestock, but like I said, he was a nut job. I walked around the chicken pen, and I started to sniff around for clues. It was always my job to track down the criminals; it was Sam's job to catch them. Due to the rain, the tracks were almost undistinguishable. I took three more passes around the pen to see if I could find any tracks. I found it on the third pass, a small depression in the soft, wet mud. I followed the direction of the print and found more. The tracks went another fifty yards into the woods and then stopped at a small stream. All I could hope for was the path to come out of the stream again, but for now the masked robber had the advantage. This was no ordinary thief; he was smart, he was cunning, and he was dangerous.

I looked at Sam; he was carrying a rifle with him, just in case things turned for the worse. He rarely took a shot, but if he had to, I prayed that he would be accurate. We did not want to kill the thief, but we wouldn't take any chances.

We followed the stream for about three hundred yards, until the new path appeared. I spotted something moving through the trees and went to chase it, but Sam called me back. He kept me on a short leash nowadays. I followed the tracks into a patch of tall grass. The tracks were getting farther apart now. The thief was picking up his speed. I started to move faster, as I was following the tracks. I jumped over a log and landed on the other side when the air was split with the sound of cracking branches and wet grass.

The thief had led us past a bear trap, hoping we would get caught by it. I had already made one mistake. I couldn't afford to make any more. Sam had nearly lost his foot because of

the trap, and now the thief knew we were on his tail.

"Hey," I barked to Sam. "We have to be careful."

To my surprise, when I turned around to look at Sam, I saw two eyes shining in the darkness of the woods. Before I could even look again, the eyes were moving. I chased after them, ignoring Sam's calls and leaving him to chase after me.

I was definitely on the thief's tail. He was fast, but I was faster. He discovered this quickly and used his knowledge of the woods to his advantage. We ran through the dark forest, past tall trees, around fallen logs, and over the muddy ground. Without warning, the thief turned and started town towards a tall oak tree. I dived after him, but he scampered up the damp, oak trunk. I tried to jump up after him, but I couldn't reach the branches. Besides, I was never good at climbing. I wasn't made for it. I waited at the base of the tree, barking taunts and challenges to the thief to get him to come down, but he wouldn't budge. Then I heard a sound of snapping branches and shoes squishing in the cold, wet mud. It was Sam! He looked at the tree I was sitting under and saw the thief. Before he could even aim his gun the thief jumped down and started to run away. He got about five yards away when the sound of a gunshot reverberated throughout the cold, dark trees and shook the night.

Sam walked over to the thief, picked him up by the tail, and slung him over his shoulder.

"Here boy," Sam called.

I came over, and Sam patted me on the head. I started to wag my tail and licked his hand.

"That's a good dog," he said, "That 'coon won't he botherin' us any more now will he?"

Bill Swartz

Council Rock High School North

Grade 10

Teacher: Mrs. Brenda Hall

A layer of dust -- Neglected-
(in the style of Emily Dickinson)

A layer of dust — Neglected —
Alone on the Shelf— a china cup
A small Crack — hard to notice
To those who don't look up

Painted smiles — Broken handles
Hidden tale— she's Unaware
The cup - Unmoved for Years-
Yet no one Knows it's there

Next to the Ledge — it stands
So close but no one Knows
Can't push it Back — too Late
The split grows larger -- Exposed

An intricate design — Unseen —
A delicate Finish - useless
Not quite perfect — so close
Crashed to the ground — it won't be Missed

Jess Sturzenegger
Council Rock North
Grade 12
Teacher: Ms. Andrea Lamberth

To the Admissions Office: A Collection of Sonnets, Chronicling a Long Relationship

Sonnet 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art not half so temperate as she:

For thou, my wav'ring University

Cannot decide on aught but what's your fee!

Sometimes thou thinkest music of import,

And then thou shalt accept the bookish mind,

With every test and SAT you sport,

By chance, or your dean's changing thought divined:

But thou th'acceptance simply can't decide,

Nor send th'admission letters that thou ow'st,

Nor may I brag thou hast my papers eyed,

When e'er thy procrastination grow'st,

So long I write my essays or apply,

Thou longer waitest and do not reply.

Sonnet 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed,
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed:
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st,
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Julia Soper

The American Academy

Grade 12

Teacher: Dr. Sharon Traver

One Less Voice
(A poem in the style of Langston Hughes)

*America's landscape beckons with its beauty,
The golden prairie seethes in a halcyon style.
The rolling mountains challenge the bursting blue sky,
The majestic oceans wink, the crashing waves smile.*

(But the postcards are not real to me)

*Each patriotic image is a photograph,
The land is a collage of the nation's pride.
The salty air- heavy with brilliant bravery,
Crushed and spoiled by the incoming tide.*

*I cannot withstand the current which leads only to illusion,
To glorified tales of honor and grace which only create confusion.*

Can you hear America's voice, the true song she tries to sing?

*I am the prairie, whose fields are littered with lost hope,
I am the mountains, whose peaks are jagged with age,
I am the ocean, whose brackish waters mingle with tears—
Tears shed for judgment, tears shed for war,
Tears shed as my people succumb to their fears.*

*I cry for the cowards in my home of the brave,
For those enslaved in the land of the free,
For those without hope in the land of opportunity.
One less voice- my name forever tarnished,
One less voice- my dream forever impossible,
One less voice- my own deemed to silence.*

*Kara Solarz
Council Rock High School North
Grade 12
Teacher: Ms. Andrea Lamberth*

Procession of Orange

Inspired by Christo and Jeanne-Claude: The Gates,
Central Park, New York City

Bold, proud and beautiful
The orange army of fabric danced in the wind
Towering over people
Serving as a canopy, a mystery, a reminder
That we are all connected
Providing warm shadows, a common ground,
A chance to be inside the art
Words were not necessary
The gates whispered truths
That we deny from ourselves
The gates provided vibrancy
On a cold February afternoon
The gates sparked up passion
That can get lost in the chaos of our lives
The gates provided a sweet melody
As they rumbled in the wind
A song that can never be forgotten
Or rekindled

Caitlin Ozga
Wissahickon High School
Grade 12
Teacher: Mr. Fiorentino

Ogygia

Sometimes, she cannot help but pity him

When he sleeps:

Hard lines of his body prone and soft lines of his face relaxed.

She rarely sees them.

He sleeps with his arm thrown over his eyes,

Fending off unseen foes and protecting from

Blows that he anticipates even in his dreams.

Please, he roared.

Send me back to the kingdom that my father entrusted to me.

A king, indeed.

It's in his gait as he paces along the beach.

Back and forth, like an animal caged before he retreats in quiet magnificence.

She likes to think she has tamed him, but the ferocity still lingers in his eyes.

Please, he begged.

Let me know the son that knows nothing of me.

There is something intoxicating

About seeing this man on his knees, pleading with his entire being.

She could give in to him; release him to the whims of the universe.

She likes to think she has broken him.

Please, he whispers.

Give me back to my wife.

These words, so soft and convincing,

Nearly penetrate.

But how can this woman compare?

Surely not in beauty, nor tenderness.

She likes to think she has persuaded him.

His sobs wrack her

Almost as much as they wrack him.

At night, his chest rasps with each deep breath,

And his voice is as worn as his resolve.

Times like these, she finds it hard

To congratulate herself on her victory.

Watching him sail away

Is not as difficult as she anticipated.

For years, she has followed his journey on the map formed by his scars.

Countless nights, and she has memorized each trial and encounter.

She realizes that the man that exists in her mind

Is more satisfying than the one she released.

But, for once, blessed as she is,

She finds herself jealous of a mortal.

Lauren Fram

Council Rock High School North

Grade 12

Teacher: Ms. Andrea Lamberth

The Gleaner

Is published during the academic year by
Delaware Valley College students.

The Gleaner is a student publication and the opinions
expressed within are not necessarily those of the Gleaner Staff or
administration. Neither the College nor the staff will assume
responsibility for plagiarism unknowing occurring within.



